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John Gorham Palfrey  
of Cambridge  
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30 Apr. 1813

North American Review  
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1 Cornhill

THE  
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE,

A play,

IN FIVE ACTS,

By E. L. BULWER Esq.

AUTHOR OF

"*Rienzi*" "*The East Days of Pompeii*," &c.

45 Ann Street, Dec. 183

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**A Play,**

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

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"RIENZI," &c.

*Edward Fitzball - Lytton*  
"Ne pour les passions et pour le repentir."  
VOLTAIRE, *Irene*, Act. 5, Sc. 1.

NEW YORK:

SAUNDERS & OTLEY, ANN STREET,  
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1836.

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DEDICATED  
TO  
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FROM WHOM THE ARTISTS,  
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MAY LEARN THAT  
ART IS THE POETRY OF NATURE,  
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THE TRUE  
THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF  
THE IDEAL.

*Paris,—Dec. 21st, 1835.*





## P R E F A C E.

It seems among the caprices of literature, that one whose life has excited an interest so unfading and universal, and whose destinies have even more than the splendors of his reign, the solemn graces of his court, or the stately muses of Racine—with no unreal poetry the memory of Louis XIV.—that one whose very fate was a poem, whose very struggles were a drama, should have furnished so little inspiration to a poet, and escaped altogether the resuscitation of the stage. If it be true (as I hold it indisputable) that the great material of dramatic representation lies not so much in the analysis of one, as in the delineation of adverse and opposing passions, perhaps no subject can be found more adapted to the skill of the dramatic poet than the love and the repentance, the fall and the atonement, of Madame de la Valliere. The strongest contrast of motives—the most tragic struggle of impulse and of principle in the breast of a woman, is ever that which is created by the conflict of the Affections and the Conscience: Nor does the spectacle fail of a great and an impressive moral, if, after all the concessions and most of the triumphs of the first, the last becomes eventually the victor.

The mind of Madame de la Valliere was not of the highest order. With her the reasoning faculty was seated in the heart; but her very weakness, united and embellished as it was with so much genuine tenderness of sentiment and honest depth of emotion, ought to render her character yet more affecting on the stage. For pathos is rarely derived from the sternness of qualities purely intellectual; and we are led, by our sympathies with the infirmities of our nature, to conclusions that purify and exalt it. The philosophy of the drama is the metaphysics of the passions.

But if the character of Madame de la Valliere be dramatic, it is a task, I allow, of considerable difficulty, to concentrate the events of her life into the limits of a drama. The Probabilities require us to extend the period of action over the eight years of her historical career; that sad, not sudden, but unceasing, progress from innocence to splendor—from the idolized to the deserted—from the deserted to the penitent and devout. In the interval between the second and third act more especially, the reader will tacitly supply the lapse of time that may seem to him required by such harmonies as Fiction, insensibly, as it were, establishes with Fact.

The time is past for discussing the propriety of the Unities, which even the dazzling example of the Author of Sardanapalus could not prove to be other than the sacrifice of Nature, from a misguided superstition for the Natural. The unity of character—the only one, indeed, on which Aristotle very peremptorily insists—is also the only one which all time and all criticism must recognize as essential and indispensable. When the Stagirate condemns Euripides for violating the unity of his character of Iphigenia, by ascribing to her, in one sentence, sentiments wholly inapposite to, and irreconcilable with, the character which proceeding sentences had portrayed, that great philosopher proved by the most illustrious example, what common

sense teaches of itself—viz., that no poetry of expression can atone for that crime in poetical creation by which the creatures are made inconsistent with themselves. It may, however, be noticeable, that when fidelity to truth compels us to waive the minor unity of *time*, nicer and more delicate refinements of art are sometimes afforded us in our treatment of the unity of *character*. Maintaining the main and paramount qualities that individualize our creation, we are enabled subtly, and, (to the uninvestigating) almost insensibly, to show how we have served ourselves of the lapse of time, to modify them or develop. Macbeth in the fifth act is not the Macbeth of the first. But the bold, the ruthless, never the *hardened* tyrant, is precisely that which years and events would necessarily ripen, from the brave, but vacillating, the tender but ambitious Thane, who requires omens and prediction, the urgings of hell, and the familiar inspirations of a fatter and more powerful mind, to shape the thought into action, the "Dare not," to "I will."

In the Play now submitted to the reader, the supposed interval of time between the second and third act produces, though not perhaps very markedly, its effect on the character of Louis,—it brings (as that interval of time did in life) into more visible display his inferior and vainer qualities, his gorgeous and sovereign selfishness, his morbid craving for amusement, (the mental vision aching beneath the glare of his own pomp,) the properties of a temperament restless, eager, susceptible, yet cold, with pampered energies and uncultivated resources. In the earlier portion of the play, Louis is not yet "The Great." He is the Louis of Fontainebleau,—not the Louis of Versailles,—in the flush of a brilliant youth, in the excitement of a first love.

It is a task not a little arduous to convey to the spectator or the reader the notion at once of what Louis the Fourteenth appears to posterity, and of what he seemed to his contemporaries. Nor would it perhaps be possible to effect the former object, and yet to give La Vallière all her real excuses for her weakness, if fortunately in representing Louis as the lover we did not place him in the very position most favorable to his external graces, his felicity of phrase, his magnificence of taste, his softness of feeling disguising his want of heart, and that peculiar royalty of thought and sentiment, which had the twofold advantage of rendering homely and plebeian those who rejected, bombastic and ridiculous those who adopted, the imitation.

The Duke de Lauzun,<sup>1</sup> who, in the judgment of La Bruyère, was to bequeath, in himself, an enigma to posterity, has left to our more distant examination a character sufficiently intelligible. Remarkable talents enabled him to cheat with grandeur, and to be convicted of fraud in an attitude of grace. He never was more admired than in what were called his "misfortunes!" In other words, the moiled reverses of a strong-minded regue appeared in him but the sufferings of a philosophical hero. His genius was his destruction. Daring, versatile, sarcastic, sceptical, every thing his fate presented to him, whether of obstruction or advancement, was a trifle to be toyed with to-day, and thrown away to-morrow. With all his general lack of

<sup>1</sup> Lauzun was properly but a Count at the date of the Play. But as he is so well known by his title and higher title, I have ventured on the slight anachronism.

principle, he betrayed, it is true, occasional feelings of generosity and glimpses of an original nobleness. But I suspect that he himself would have esteemed the best part of his nature to be its weakest and most foolish. In this Play, the Duke De Lauzun is represented in that view of his multifarious character which seemed to me most in keeping with the position he assumed towards both Montespan and La Valliere, and most in harmony with the grouping of my own composition. But whoever performs the part will forgive me for observing, that whatever it contains of comic must be regarded as a sign of the easy complacency with which a bold and able *intrigant* moves among things and persons that he deems his puppets, trifling as it were, with a part beneath his real genius. His gaiety is not animal, but intellectual—at least, such is my conception of it.

In the character of Bragelone is embodied whatever in the Play pretends to the Heroic,—it is an Episode that introduces the Epic into a Court Poem. In this character I have used my license of idealizing the Realities. The Bragelone of Biography died of a broken heart after Madame de la Valliere became the victim of the King. In reviving, I have dared to re-create him. In his character I seek to portray and individualize the old, chivalric, high-thoughted, and high-spirited race upon whose graves rose the secklers, prodigate, and brilliant generation of Louis XIV. That splendid Sovereign, whose natural talents were perhaps greater than we are now willing to acknowledge, confirmed the form of the Monarchy, but destroyed the soul of the Aristocracy. Chivalry was the Mother of the Court, and died of her *accouchement*. Bragelone stands alone—the last of his race. His only weakness—the only infirmity which reduces him from our respect to our sympathy—is in his misplaced, but gallant and faithful love. Removed from this influence, he never appears but to dwarf the proportions of the Falsely-Great. Lauzun beside him sinks into the slanderous jester; the haughty Louis himself, into the abashed and superstitious criminal. But, brought under the influence of his passion, the sternness of Bragelone is ever invaded by his softness. He is here again meant to be faithful to the age he represents—to the spirit of its knightly and crusader-like Romance. Even his adoption of the cowl is in harmony with the ancient religious character—with the Ideal of the old Franc and Germanic race, in which the warrior was the germ of the monk, and Life laid its trophies on the altar, and sought its resting-place in the cell. Where the character of Bragelone most takes its leaven from the times on which he has fallen, is in his actual experience of mankind. His dim prophecies to the King—his soliloquy on life towards the close of the fifth act—his definition of the true religion of the cloister, partake of the philosophy we form not in the closet, but in the world. Nor would these sentiments, I allow, be appropriate to Bragelone, regarded as the mere soldier; but they are of the wisdom which sorrow and disappointment may be supposed to bring to a powerful and reflective mind, which the rough contact of the world, and the actual interchange of various opinions with various men, have released from the prejudices of class and sect: and we must remember that the sentiments he utters, as to the effect of the wars of Louis, and the real uses of the monastery, were not heresies unbroached at that day even among loyal subjects and orthodox Catholics.

I know not how far my execution of this character has fallen short of the conception. I know still less how far it will produce upon the stage the more subtle and the higher effects it is intended to convey. Alas! the Plot of the Drama does not introduce it sufficiently often, to render it worthy the acceptance of that great actor who never mistakes the conception of the Author, and yet who invariably exalts it.

May I now be permitted to pass from the Personages of this Drama to something between an explanation and an apology for my general treatment of the subject I have selected, and of the times I have portrayed. It seems to me that subject and time alike furnished materials for the graver Comedy, no less than for the development of tragic emotions. The intrigues, the pageants, the hollowness and servility of the Court of France, the philosophy embodied by a Rochefoucault, the manners delineated by a Dangeau, the morality extolled by a Genlis, are not to be approached by epic declamation; they are only brought nearer to us by the glass of an easy satire, which defines the object by diminishing, not exaggerating, the proportions which our human vision is too apt to enlarge.

The beings of Versailles were, for the most part, men to whom passions (which *are* tragedy) were unknown. It was through humors (which *are* comedy) that they represented the form and the spirit of the society they created, working out through gaiety, a grave and a lasting moral. If this, my impression of that scene, and that time, be true, I trust I shall be pardoned, not only for the tone of the lighter portions of the play, but for the use of a diction, in such portions, which will probably sound a little prosaic to ears accustomed to the florid prettiness of modern verse, or attuned to the elaborate quaintness of the elder dramatists. To thoughts and to persons that belong to prose, belongs prosaic expression. Where the subject of itself rises into poetry, I have given such advantage of language as I can command. The essence of the true Poetical is, doubtless, the Appropriate.

I now dismiss this experiment to its fate, prefaced by these (I fear tedious) observations, which may prove at least that it is not without something of preliminary study that I have adventured to diverge into a new path of that great realm of fiction, which grants indeed to indolence the shade and the fountain, but guards the fruit and the treasure, as the just monopoly of labor.\*

E. L. B.

Paris, 21st December, 1835.

\* The necessities of political justice have obliged me to an anachronism in the punishment of Madame de Montespan. In reality, if longer deferred, it was yet more strikingly retributive than it appears in the play. Betraying a friend, by a friend she was betrayed; the nun was avenged by the devotee; and what Montespan was to La Valliere, Maintenon was to Montespan. I should also add that the concentration and climax of interest required on the stage has obliged me to introduce Louis in the *last* scene. According to History, it was in the hotel of Madame de la Valliere (when she announced her intention of taking the veil) that he acted that part, and uttered those sentiments which I have ascribed him to in the convent of the Carmelites.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THIS Play (with the above Preface) was written in the autumn and winter of 1835. It was submitted to no other opinion than that of Mr. Macready, with whom the Author had the honor of a personal acquaintance; and who, on perusal, was obligingly anxious for its performance at Drury Lane. The manager of that theatre wished, naturally perhaps, to see the manuscript before he hazarded the play; the Author (perhaps no less naturally) declined a condition from a manager that he would not have listened to from a publisher. He considered that in trusting to the chance of a new experiment in literature, no risk was equal to his own. Subsequently, Mr. Morris of the Haymarket Theatre, was desirous of the right of performing the play, and acceded at once to the terms proposed. A difficulty with respect to the actors obliged the Author, however, to break off the negotiation, and to decide upon confining the publication of his Drama to the press. The disinterested and generous zeal of Mr. Macready, (to whose genius the character allotted to him is by no means adequate,) with the very prompt and liberal accedence, on the part of the present manager of Covent Garden, to the conditions of the Author, have induced him, however, to alter his intention, and to rank himself with the Neophytes of that great class of writers whose rights, some years ago, when he little thought he should ever be one of so illustrious a fraternity, it was his fortune to protect and to extend,

*Albany, October, 1836.*



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

---

Louis the Fourteenth.

The Duke de Lauzun, }  
Count Grammont, } (Courtiers)  
Marquis de Montespan, }

The Marquis de Bragelone (*betrothed to Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*)

Bertrand (*the Armorer.*)

*Courtiers, Gentlemen of the Chamber, Priests, &c.*

Madame de La Valliere.

Mademoiselle (afterwards Duchess) de la Valliere.

Madame de Montespan.

The Queen.

Abbess.

*Nuns, Ladies, Maids of Honor, &c.*





**THE**  
**DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.**



THE  
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE

---

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*Time—sun-set. On the foreground an old Chateau; beyond, Vineyards and Woods, which present, through their openings, Views of a River, reflecting the sun-set. At a distance, the turrets of the Convent of the Carmelites.*

*Madame and Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

'Tis our last eve, my mother!

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Thou regret'st it,

My own Louise! albeit the court invites thee—

A court beside whose glories, dull and dim

The pomp of eastern kings, by poets told;

A court—

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

In which I shall not see my mother!

Nor these old walls, in which, from every stone,

Childhood speaks eloquent of happy years;

Nor vines and woods, which bade me love the earth,  
Nor yonder spires which raised that love to God!—

*(The vesper bell tolls.)*

The vesper bell!—my mother, when, once more,  
I hear from those grey towers that holy chime,  
May the child's heart be still as full of Heaven,  
And callous to all thoughts of earth, save those  
Which mirror Eden in the face of home!

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Do I not know thy soul?—through every snare  
My gentle dove shall 'scape with spotless plumes.  
Alone in courts, I have no fear for *thee*;—  
Some natures take from Innocence the lore  
Experience teaches; and their delicate leaves,  
Like the soft plant, shut out all wrong, and shrink  
From vice by instinct, as the wise by knowledge:  
And such is thine! *My* voice thou wilt not hear,  
But Thought shall whisper where my voice would warn,  
And Conscience be thy mother and thy guide!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

Oh may I merit all thy care, and most  
Thy present trust!—Thou'lt write to me, my mother,  
And tell me of thyself: amidst the court  
My childhood's images shall rise. Be kind  
To the poor cotters in the wood;—alas,  
They'll miss me in the winter!—and my birds?—  
Thy hand will feed them?—

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

And that noble heart  
That loves me as my daughter should be loved—  
The gallant Bragelone?—should I hear

\*The author has, throughout this play, availed himself of the poetical licence to give to the name of Bragelone the Italian pronunciation, and to accent the final e.

Some tidings Fame forgets—if in the din  
Of camps I learn thy image makes his solace,  
Shall I not write of him?—

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE (*with indifference.*)

His name will breathe  
Of home and friendship;—yes!—

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Of nought beside?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

Nay, why so pressing?—let me change the theme.  
The King!—you have seen him;—is he, as they say,  
So fair—so stately?

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Ay, in truth, my daughter,  
A king that wins the awe he might command.  
Splendid in peace and terrible in war;  
Wise in the council—gentle in the bower.

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

Strange, that so often through mine early dreams  
A royal vision flitted;—a proud form,  
Upon whose brow nature had written 'empire';  
While, on the lip,—love, smiling, wrapt in sunshine  
The charmed world that was its worshipper—  
A form like that which clothed the gods of old,  
Lured from Olympus by some mortal maid,—  
Youthful it seemed—but with ambrosial youth;  
And beautiful—but half as beauty were,  
A garb too earthly for a thing divine:—  
Was it not strange, my mother?

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

A child's fancy,  
Breathed into life by thy brave father's soul.

He taught thee, in thy cradle yet, to lisp  
 Thy sovereign's name in prayer—and still together,  
 In thy first infant creed, were linked the lessons  
 'TO HONOR GOD, AND LOVE THE KING;' it was  
 A part of that old knightly faith of France,  
 Which made it half religion to be loyal.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

It might be so. I have preserved the lesson,  
 Ev'n with too weak a reverence.—Yet, 'tis strange!  
 A dream so oft renewed!—

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Here comes thy lover!  
 Thou wilt not blame him if his lips repeat  
 The question mine have asked? Alphonso, welcome?

## SCENE II.

*Bragelone, Madame and Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*

BRAGELONE.

My own Louise!—ah! dare I call thee so?  
 War never seemed so welcome! since we part,  
 Since the soft sunshine of thy smiles must fade  
 From these dear scenes, it soothes, at least to think  
 I shall not linger on the haunted spot,  
 And feel, forlorn amidst the gloom of absence,  
 How dark is all once lighted by thine eyes.

*[Madame de la Valliere retires into the chateau.]*

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Can friendship flatter thus?—or wouldst thou train  
 My ear betimes to learn the courtier's speech?

BRAGELONE.

Louise! Louise! this is our parting hour :  
 Me war demands—and thee the court allures.  
 In such an hour, the old romance allowed  
 The maid to soften from her coy reserve,  
 And her true knight, from some kind words, to take  
 Hope's talisman to battle?—Dear Louise!  
 Say, canst thou love me?—

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Sir!—I!—love!—methinks

It is a word that—

BRAGELONE.

Sounds upon thy lips  
 Like 'land' upon the mariner's, and speaks  
 Of home and rest after a stormy sea.  
 Sweet girl, my youth was passed in camps; and war  
 Hath somewhat scathed my manhood ere my time.  
 Our years are scarce well-mated; the soft spring  
 Is thine, and o'er my summer's waning noon  
 Grave autumn creeps. Thou say'st 'I flatter!'—well  
 Love taught me first the golden words in which  
 The honest heart still coins its massive ore.  
 But fairer words, from falser lips, will soon  
 Make *my* plain courtship rude.—Louise! thy sire  
 Betrothed us in thy childhood. I have watched thee  
 Bud into virgin May, and in thy youth  
 Have seemed to hoard my own!—I think of *thee*  
 And I am youthful still. The passionate prayer—  
 The wild idolatry—the purple light  
 Bathing the cold earth from a Hebe's urn;—  
 Yea, all the soul's divine excess which youth  
 Claims as its own, came back when first I loved thee!  
 And yet so well I love, that if thy heart  
 Recoil from mine,—if but one single wish,  
 A shade more timid than the fear which ever  
 Blends trembling twilight with the starry hope



• Of maiden dreams—would start thee from our union,  
Speak, and my suit is tongueless !—

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

O, my lord !

If to believe all France's chivalry  
Boasts not a nobler champion,—if to feel  
Proud in your friendship, honored in your trust,—  
If this be love, and I have known no other,  
Why then—

BRAGELONE.

Why then, thou lov'st me !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE. (*aside.*

Shall I say it ?

I feel 'twere to deceive him ! Is it love ?  
Love !—no, it is not love !—(*Aloud.*) My noble lord,  
As yet I know not all mine own weak heart ;  
I would not pain thee, yet would not betray.  
Legend and song have often painted love,  
And my heart whispers not the love which should be  
The answer to thine own :—thou hadst best forget me !

BRAGELONE.

Forget !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

I am not worthy of thee ?

BRAGELONE.

Hold !—

My soul is less heroic than I deemed it.  
Perchance my passion asks too much from thine,  
And would forestal the fruit ere yet the blossom  
Blushes from out the coy and maiden leaves.  
No ! let *me* love ; and say, perchance the time  
May come when *thou* wilt bid me *not* forget thee.

Absence may plead my cause ; it hath some magic ;  
 I fear not contrast with the courtier-herd ;  
 And thou art not Louise if thou art won  
 By a smooth outside and a honeyed tongue.  
 No ! when thou seest these hunters after power,  
 These shadows, minioned to the royal sun,—  
 Proud to the humble, servile to the great,—  
 Perchance thou'lt learn how much one honest heart,  
 That never wronged a friend or shunn'd a foe,—  
 How much the old hereditary knighthood,  
 Faithful to God, to glory, and to love,  
 Outweighs an universe of cringing courtiers !  
 Louise, I ask no more !—I bide my time !

*Re-enter Madame de la Valliere from the chateau.*

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

The twilight-darkens. Art thou now, Alphonso,  
 Convinced her heart is such as thou wouldst have it ?

BRAGELONE.

It is a heavenly tablet—but my name  
 Good angels have not writ there !

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Nay, as yet,  
 Love wears the mask of friendship: she must love thee.

BRAGELONE (*half incredulously.*)

Think'st thou so ?

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Ay, be sure ?

BRAGELONE.

I'll think so too.

(*Turns to Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*)

Bright lady of my heart !—(*Aside.*) By Heaven !-'tis true !

The rose grows richer on her cheek, like hues  
That, in the silence of the virgin dawn,  
Predict, in blushes, light that glads the earth.  
Her mother spoke aright;—ah, yes, she loves me!  
Bright lady of my heart, farewell! and yet  
Again—farewell!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Honor and health be with you!

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Nay, my Louise, when warriors wend to battle,  
The maid they serve grows half a warrior too;  
And does not blush to bind on mailed bosoms,  
The banner of her colors.

BRAGELONE.

Dare I ask it?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

A soldier's child could never blush, my Lord,  
To belt so brave a breast;—and yet,—well, wear it.  
(*Placing her scarf round Bragelone's hauberk.*)

BRAGELONE.

Ah! add for thy sake.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

For the sake of one

Who honors worth, and ne'er since Bayard fell,  
Have banners flaunted o'er a knight more true  
To France and Fame;—

BRAGELONE.

And love?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Nay, hush, my Lord;

I said not that.

BRAGELONE.

But France and Fame shall say it!

Yes, if thou hears't men speak of Bragelone,  
 If proudest chiefs confess he bore him bravely,  
 Come life, come death, his glory shall be thine,  
 And all the light it borrowed from thine eyes,  
 Shall gild thy name. Ah! scorn not *then* to say,  
 \*He loved me well! How well! God shield and bless thee?

*Exit Bragelone.*MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE (*aside.*)Most worthy love! *why* can I love him not?

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Peace to his gallant heart? when next we meet,  
 May I have gained a son—and thou——

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE (*quickly.*)

My mother,

This night let every thought be given to *thee*!  
 Beautiful scene, farewell!—farewell, my home!  
 And thou, grey convent, whose inspiring chime  
 Measures the hours with prayer, that morn and eve  
 Life may ascend the ladder of the angels,  
 And climb to heaven's serene retreats, farewell!  
 And now, my mother!—no! some hours must yet  
 Pass ere our parting.

MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

Cheer thee, my Louise!

And let us now within; the dews are falling—

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

And I forgot how ill thy frame may bear them,  
 Pardon!—within, within!—

(*Stopping short and gazing fondly on Madame de la Valliere.*)

Your hand, dear mother!

[*Exit.*]

## SCENE III.

*An old Armory, of the heavy French Architecture preceding the time of Francis the First, in the Castle of Bragelone.*

*Bertrand the armorer, employed in polishing a sword.*

BERTRAND.

There now ! I think this blade will scarcely shame  
My gallant master's hand ; it was the weapon,  
So legends say, with which the old Lord Rodolph  
Slew by postern gate, his lady's leman !  
Oh, we're a haughty race—we old French lords ;  
Our honor is unrusted as our steel,  
And when provoked, as ruthless !

*Enter Bragelone.*

BRAGELONE.

Ah, old Bertrand !

Why, your brave spirit, 'mid these coats of mail,  
Grows young again. So ! this, then, is the sword  
You'd have me wear. God wot ! a tranchant blade,  
Not of the modern fashion.

BERTRAND.

My good lord,

Yourself are scarcely of the modern fashion.  
They tell me, that to serve one's king for nothing,  
To deem one's country worthier than one's self,  
To hold one's honor not a phrase to swear by,—  
They tell me now, all this is out of fashion.  
Come take the sword my lord !—you have your father's  
Stout arm and lordly heart : they're out of fashion,  
And yet you keep the one—come, take the other.

BRAGELONE.

Why you turn satirist!

BERTRAND.

Satirist! what is that?

BRAGELONE.

Satirists, my friend, are men who speak the truth  
That courts may say—they do not know the fashion!  
Satire on Vice is Wit's revenge on fools  
That slander Virtue!—How now! look ye Bertrand!  
Methinks there is a notch here.

BERTRAND.

Ay, my lord;

I would not grind it out;—'twas here the blade  
Clove through the helmet, ev'n unto the chin,  
Of that irreverent and most scoundrel Dutchman  
Who stabbed you, through your hauberk-joints—what time  
You placed your breast before the king.

BRAGELONE.

Hence, ever

Be it believed, that, in his hour of need,  
A king's sole safeguard are his subjects hearts!  
Ha, ha! good sword! that was a famous stroke!  
Thou didst brave deeds that day, thou quaint old servant,  
Though now—thou'rt not the fashion!

BERTRAND.

Bless that look,

And that glad laugh! they bring me back the day  
When first old Bertrand armed you for the wars,—  
A fair-faced stripling; yet, beshrew my heart,  
You spurred that field before the bearded chins,  
And saved the gallant Lord La Valliere's standard,  
And yet you were a stripling then.

BRAGELONE.

La Valliere !

The very name goes dancing through my veins.  
 Bertrand, look round the armory ! Is there nought  
 I wore that first campaign ? Nay, nay ! no matter !  
 I wear the *name within* me. Harkye, Bertrand !  
 We're not so young as then we were : when next  
 We meet, old friend, we both will end our labors,  
 And find some nook, amidst yon antique trophies,  
 Wherein to hang this idle mail.

BERTRAND.

Huzza !

The village dames speak truth—my Lord will marry !  
 And I shall nurse, in these old withered arms,  
 Another boy—for France another hero.  
 Ha, ha ! I am so happy.

BRAGELONE.

Good old man !

Why this is like my father's hall—since thus  
 My father's servants love me !

BERTRAND.

All must love you !

BRAGELONE.

All !—let me think so !

*(Bugle sounds.)*

Hark, the impatient bugle !

I hear the neigh of my exultant charger,  
 Breathing from far the glorious air of war.  
 Give me the sword !

*(Enter Servant, with a letter.)*

Her mother's hand !—' Louise,

Arrived at court, writes sadly, and amidst  
 The splendor pines for home,'—I knew she would !

My own Louise!—‘Speaks much of the King’s goodness;’—

Goodness to her!—that thought shall give the King  
A tenfold better soldier?—‘From thy friend,  
Who trusts ere long to hail thee as her son.’  
Her son!—a blessed name! These lines shall be  
My heart’s true shield, and ward away each weapon.  
He who shall wed Louise has conquered Fate,  
And smiles at earthly foes!—Again the bugle!  
Give me your hand, old man! My fiery youth  
Went not to battle with so blithe a soul  
As now burns in me.—So! she pines for home—  
I knew she would—I knew it! Farewell, Bertrand!

[*Exit Bragelone.*]

BERTRAND.

Oh! there’ll be merry doings in the hall  
When my dear lord returns! A merry wedding,  
And then—and then—oh, such a merry christening!  
How well I fancy his grave manly face  
Brightening upon his first born. (*As he is going.*)

*Re-enter Bragelone.*

BRAGELONE.

Ho, there! Bertrand!  
One charge I had forgot:—Be sure they train  
The woodbine richly round the western wing—  
My mother’s old apartment. Well, man! well!  
Do you not hear me?

BERTRAND.

You, my lord! the woodbine?

BRAGELONE.

Yes; see it duly done. I know she loves it;  
It clambers round her lattice. I would not  
Have one thing absent she could miss.

Remember!

[*Exit Bragelone.*]



BERTRAND.

And this is he whom Warriors call ' the Stern !'  
The dove's heart beats beneath that lion breast.  
Pray Heaven his lady may deserve him ! Oh,  
What news for my good dame !—i'faith, I'm glad  
I was the first to learn the secret. So !  
This year a wife—next year a boy ! I'll teach  
The young rogue how his father clove the Dutchman  
Down to the chin ! Ha, ha ! old Bertrand now  
Will be of use again on winter nights,—  
I know he'll be the picture of his father !

[Exit Bertrand.]

## SCENE IV.

*An Ante-chamber in the Palace of Fontainebleau.**Enter Lauzun and Grammont at opposite doors.*

LAUZUN.

Ah, Count, good day !—Were you at court last night ?

GRAMMONT.

Yes ; and the court is grown the richer by  
A young new beauty.

LAUZUN.

So !—her name ?

GRAMMONT.

La Valliere !

LAUZUN.

Ay, I have heard ;—a maid of honor ?

GRAMMONT.

Yes.

The women say *she's* plain.

LAUZUN.

The women! oh,  
The case it is that's plain—*she* must be lovely!

GRAMMONT.

The dear kind gossips of the court, declare  
The pretty novice hath conceived a fancy—  
A wild, romantic, innocent, strange fancy—  
For our young King; a girlish love, like that  
Told of in fairy tales: she saw his picture,  
Sighed to the canvas, murmured to the colors,  
And—fell in love with carmine and gambouge.

LAUZUN.

The simple dreamer! Well, she saw the king?

GRAMMONT.

And while she saw him, like a rose, when May  
Breathes o'er its bending bloom, she seemed to shrink  
Into her modest self, and a low sigh  
Shook blushes (sweetest rose-leaves!) from her beauty

LAUZUN.

You paint it well.

GRAMMONT.

And ever since that hour  
She bears the smiling malice of her comrades  
With an unconscious and an easy sweetness;  
As if alike *her* virtue and *his* greatness  
Made love impossible:—so, down the stream  
Of purest thought, her heart glides on to danger.

LAUZUN.

Did Louis note her?—Has he heard the gossip?

GRAMMONT.

Neither, methinks : his Majesty is cold.  
The art of pomp, and not the art of love,  
Tutors his skill—Augustus more than Ovid.

LAUZUN.

The time will come ! The King as yet is young,  
Flush 'd with the novelty of sway, and fired  
With the great dream of cutting Dutchmen's throats :  
A tiresome dream—the poets call it ' Glory.'

GRAMMONT.

Somuch the better,—'tis one rival less ;  
The handsome King would prove a dangerous suitor.

LAUZUN.

Oh, hang the danger !—He must have a mistress ;  
'Tis an essential to a court : how many  
Favors one scarcely likes to ask a King,  
One flatters from a King's inamorata !  
We courtiers fatten on the royal vices ;  
And, while the King lives chaste, he cheats, he robs me,  
Of ninety-nine per cent !

GRAMMONT.

Ha, ha !—Well, Duke,  
We meet again to-night. You join the revels ?  
Till then, adieu !

LAUZUN.

Adieu, dear count !

[Exit Grammont.]

The King

Must have a mistress : I must lead that mistress.  
The times are changed !—'twas by the sword and spear  
Our fathers bought ambition—vulgar butchers !  
But now our wit's our spear—intrigue our armor ;  
The ante-chamber is our field of battle ;  
And the best hero is—the cleverest rogue !

[Exit Lauzun.]

SCENE V.

*Night—the Gardens of the Fontainebleau, brilliantly illuminated with colored lamps—Fountains, vases, and statues in perspective\*—A pavilion in the back-ground—to the right, the Palace of the Fontainebleau, illuminated.*

*Enter Courtiers, Ladies, &c.*

*A Dance.*

*Then enter Grammont and Lauzun.*

LAUZUN.

A brilliant scene!

GRAMMONT.

And see! to make it brighter,  
That most divine, diverting, pompous Marquis—

LAUZUN.

Who has but one idea, and two phrases!

GRAMMONT.

The one idea—that he is a marquis!  
And the two phrases?

LAUZUN.

Let himself inform you.

*Enter the Marquis de Montespan, ridiculously over-dressed.*

\* The effect of the scene should be principally made by jets-d'eau, waterfalls, &c.

MONTESPAN.

My Lords, I'm charmed to see you!—How's your health,  
Dear Count?

GRAMMONT.

But poorly, Sir.

MONTESPANT.

I'm in despair!

Yours, my Lord Duke?

LAUZUN.

Most flourishing!

MONTESPAN.

I'm ravished

LAUZUN.

Why don't you bring your wife to court, dear Marquis?

MONTESPAN.

My wife!—(what's that to him?)—she hates the pomp,  
And stays at home to think of *me*—and bless  
The fate that made her—

LAUZUN.

Married to a Marquis!

MONTESPAN.

Precisely so!

LAUZUN.

And such a Marquis!

MONTESPAN.

Oh!

You charm, you ravish me!

LAUZUN.

The very words  
Your lovely lady said when last I saw her !

MONTESPAN.

She copies me—'tis natural !—

GRAMMONT.

Hist !—the King !

*Enter Louis, followed by Courtiers, &c.*

LOUIS.

Fair eve and pleasant revels to you all !  
Ah, Duke !—a word with you !

*(Courtiers give way.)*

Thou hast seen, my Lauzun,  
The new and fairest floweret of our court,  
This youngest of the graces—sweet La Valliere,  
Blushing beneath the world's admiring eyes ?

LAUZUN *(aside.)*

(So, so !—he's caught !) Your Majesty speaks warmly ;  
Your praise is just—and grateful—

LOUIS.

Grateful ?

LAUZUN.

Aye.

Know you not, Sire, it is the jest, among  
The pretty prattlers of the royal chamber,  
That this young Dian of the woods has found  
Endymion in a king,—a summer dream,  
Bright, but with vestal fancies !—scarcely love,

But that wild interval of hopes and fears  
Through which the child glides, trembling, to the woman ?

LOUIS.

Blest thought ! Oh what a picture of delight  
Your words have painted !—

LAUZUN.

While we speak, behold,  
Through yonder alleys, with her sister planets,  
Your moonlight beauty gleams.

LOUIS.

'Tis she !—this shade  
Shall hide us !—quick—

[*Enters one of the bosquets.*]

LAUZUN (*following him.*)

I trust my creditors  
Will grow the merrier from this night's adventure !

*Enter Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and Maids of Honor.*

FIRST MAID.

How handsome looks the Duke de Guiche to-night !

SECOND MAID.

Well ! to my taste, the graceful Grammont bears  
The bell from all !—

THIRD MAID.

But, then, that charming Lauzun  
Has so much wit !

FIRST MAID.

And which, of all these gallants,  
May please the fair La Valliere most ?

MADMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In truth  
I scarcely marked them; when the King is by,  
Who can have eye, or ear, or thought for others?

FIRST MAID.

You raise your fancies high!

SECOND MAID.

And raise them vainly!  
The King disdains all love!

MADMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Who spoke of love?  
The sunflower, gazing on the Lord of heaven,  
Asks but its sun to shine?—Who spoke of love?  
And who would wish the bright and lofty Louis  
To stoop from glory? Love should not confound  
So great a spirit with the herd of men.  
Who spoke of love?—

FIRST MAID.

My country friend, you talk  
Extremely well; but some young lord will teach you  
To think of Louis less, and more of love.

MADMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, even the very presence of his greatness  
Exalts the heart from each more low temptation.  
He seems to walk the earth as if to raise  
And purify our wandering thoughts, by fixing  
Thought on himself;—and she who thinks on Louis  
Shuts out the world, and scorns the name of love!

FIRST MAID.

Wait till you're tried—

(*Music.*)

But hark! the music chides us



For wasting this most heavenly night so idly.  
Come! let us join the dancers.

[*Exeunt Maids.*

(*As La Valliere follows, the King steals from the bosquet, and takes her hand, while Lauzun retires in the opposite direction.*)

LOUIS.

Sweet La Valliere!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Ah!—

LOUIS.

Nay, fair lady, fly not, ere we welcome  
Her who gives night its beauty!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire, permit me!

My comrades wait me.

LOUIS.

What! my loveliest subject  
So soon a rebel? Silent!—Well, be mute,  
And teach the world the eloquence of blushes.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

I may not listen—

LOUIS.

What if *I* had set  
Thyself the example? What if I had listened,  
Veiled by yon friendly boughs, and dared to dream  
That one blest word which spoke of Louis absent  
Might charm his presence, and make Nature music?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Yes did not Sire! you could not!

LOUIS.

Could not hear thee,

Nor pine for these divine, unwitnessed moments,  
To pray thee, dearest lady, to divorce  
No more the thought of love from him who loves thee,  
And—faithful still to glory—swears thy heart  
Unfolds the fairest world a King can conquer!  
Hear me, Louise!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

No, Sire; forget those words!

I am not what their foolish meaning spoke me,  
But a poor simple girl, who loves her King,  
And honor *more*! Forget, and do not scorn me!  
[*Exit Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*]

LOUIS.

Her modest coyness fires me more than all  
Her half-unconscious and most virgin love,  
(*Enter Queen, Courtiers, Ladies, Guests, &c.; Lauzun,  
Grammont, and Montespan.*)  
Well, would the dancers pause awhile?

QUEEN.

Ev'n pleasure

Wearies at last.

LOUIS.

We've but to change its aspect,  
And it resumes its freshness.—Ere the banquet  
Calls us, my friends we have prepared a game  
To shame the lottery of this life, wherein  
Each prize is neighbored by a thousand blanks.  
Methinks it is the duty of a monarch  
To set the balance right, and bid the wheel  
Shower nought but prizes on the hearts he loves.  
What ho, there! with a merry music, raise  
Fortune, to shew how Merit conquers Honors!

*Music.*

*(The Pavilion at the back of the stage opens, and discovers the Temple of Fortune, superbly illuminated. Fortune; at her feet a wheel of light; at either hand, a golden vase, over each of which presides a figure—the one representing Merit, the other Honor.*

## LOUIS.

Approach, fair dames and gallants! Aye, as now,  
May Fortune smile upon the friends of Louis.

*(The Courtiers and Ladies groupe around the vases. From the one over which Merit presides they draw lots, and receive in return from Honor various gifts of jewels, &c.)*

*Enter Mademoiselle de la Valliere, at the back of the stage. The King joins and converses with her in dumb show.*

## MONTESPAN.

Now, then, for me.

*(Draws, and receives a couple of large white feathers.)*

Was ever seen such luck!

I'm in despair!

## LAUZUN.

What, Marquis! know ye not  
These feathers are a magic spell, to keep  
All foes at distance?

## MONTESPAN.

La, you now! indeed!

## LAUZUN.

Would you be safe, show always the white feather!

GRAMMONT.

Ha, ha! Come, Marquis, let me put the charm  
Into its proper place.

*(Sticks the feathers upon Montespan's head, like two  
horns.)*

LAUZUN.

How they become you!

MONTESPAN.

Do they, in truth? Ah, Duke, I know you flatter!  
Why, they must look like horns!

LAUZUN.

And if they do,  
You are not the first courtier who has plumed  
Himself upon his horns; they're all the fashion.

*(The Ladies surround Montespan, who appears sudden,  
and endeavors to take off the feathers—the Ladies  
prevent him.)*

FIRST LADY.

No, no; you must not! What an air they give you!  
They look so natural.

SECOND LADY.

Why, your head seems made for them.

GRAMMONT.

Hush! If the King perceive—

LAUZUN.

Ay, hush! the King  
Loves no one else to horn his loyal subjects.

*(The Ladies draw off Montespan, who appears recon-  
ciled to his ornaments, to the back of the stage.)*

LOUIS.

*(To Mademoiselle de la Valliere.)*

Nay, If you smile not on me, then the scene  
Hath lost its charm.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

O Sire, all eyes are on us!

LOUIS.

All eyes *should* learn where homage should be rendered.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

I pray you, Sire—

THE QUEEN.

Will't please your Majesty

To try your fortune?

*(Looks scornfully at Mademoiselle de la Valliere.)*

LOUIS.

Fortune! Sweet La Valliere.

I only seek my fortune in thine eyes.

*(Music. Louis draws, and receives a diamond bracelet.  
Ladies crowd round.)*

FIRST LADY.

How beautiful!

SECOND LADY.

Each gem were worth a duchy.

THIRD LADY.

Oh, happy she upon whose arm the King  
Will bind the priceless band!

LOUIS.

*(Approaching Mademoiselle de la Valliere)*

Permit me Lady,

*(Clasps the bracelet.)*

LAUZUN.

Well done—well play'd. In that droll game call'd Woman,  
Diamonds are always trumps for hearts.

FIRST LADY.

Her hair's

Too light!

SECOND LADY.

Her walk is so provincial!

THIRD LADY.

D'ye think she paints?

LAUZUN.

Ha! ha! What envious eyes,  
What fawning smiles, await the King's new Mistress!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

## ACT II.

## SCENE I.

*The Gardens of the Fontainebleau.*

*Enter Bragelone.*

BRAGELONE.

Why did we suffer her to seek the court?  
It is a soil in which the reptile Slander  
Still coils in slime around the fairest flower.  
Can it be true?—Strange rumors pierced my tent  
Coupling her name with—pah!—how foul the thought is!  
The maid the King loves!—Fie! I'll not believe it!  
I left the camp—sped hither: if she's lost,  
Why then!—down—down, base heart! wouldst *thou*  
suspect her?  
*Thou*—who should'st be her shelter from suspicion?  
But I may warn, advise, protect, and save her—  
*Save*—'tis a fearful word!

*Enter Lauzen.*

LAUZUN.

Lord Bragelone,  
Methought your warrior spirit never breathed  
The air of palaces! No evil tidings,  
I trust, from Dunkirk?

BRAGELONE.

No. The *fleur-de-lis*  
Rears her white crest unstained. Mine own affairs  
Call me to court.

LAUZUN.

Affairs! I hate the word ;

It sounds like debts.

BRAGELONE (*Aside.*)

This courtier may instruct me.

(*Aloud.*) Our King—he bears him well ?

LAUZUN.

Oh, bravely, Marquis ;

Engaged with this new palace of Versailles.

It costs some forty millions !

BRAGELONE.

Ay, the People

Groan at the burthen !

LAUZUN.

People!—what's the *People* ?

I never heard that word at court!—The *People* !

BRAGELONE.

I doubt not, Duke. The People, like the Air,  
Is rarely heard, *save* when it speaks in thunder.

I pray you grace for that old-fashioned phrase.

What is the latest news ?

LAUZUN.

His majesty

Dines half an hour before his usual time.

That's the last news at court!—it makes *sensation* !

BRAGELONE.

Is there no weightier news ? I heard at Dunkirk  
How the King loved a——loved a certain maiden—  
The brave La Valliere's daughter !



LAUZUN.

How, my Lord,  
How can you vegetate in such a place?  
I fancy the next tidings heard at Dunkirk  
Will be that—Adam's dead!

BRAGELONE.

The news is old, then?

LAUZUN.

News! *news*, indeed! Why, by this time, our lackeys  
Have worn the gossip threadbare! News!——

BRAGELONE.

The lady  
(She is a soldier's child) hath not yet bartered  
Her birthright for ambition? She rejects him?  
Speak!—She rejects him?

LAUZUN.

Humph!

BRAGELONE.

Oh, Duke, I know  
This courtier air—this most significant silence—  
With which your delicate race are wont to lie  
Away all virtue! Shame upon your manhood!  
Speak out, and say Louis la Valliere lives  
To prove to courts—that women *can* be honest!

LAUZUN.

Marquis, you're warm.

BRAGELONE.

You dare not speak!—I knew it!

LAUZUN.

Dare not?

BRAGELONE.

Oh yes, you dare, with hints and smiles,  
To darken fame—to ruin the defenceless—  
Blight with a gesture—wither with a sneer !  
Did I say ‘ dare not ? ’—No man dares it better !

LAUZUN.

My Lord these words must pass not !

BRAGELONE.

Duke forgive me !

I am a rough, stern soldier—taught from youth  
To brave offence, and by the sword alone  
Maintain the licence of my speech. Oh, say—  
Say but one word !—say this poor maid is sinless,  
And, for her father’s sake—(*her father loved me !*)  
I’ll kneel to thee for pardon !

LAUZUN.

Good, my lord,

I know not what your interest in this matter :  
’Tis said that Louis loves the fair La Valliere ;  
But what of that ?—good taste is not a crime !  
’Tis said La Valliere does not hate the King ;  
But what of that ?—it does but prove her—loyal !  
I know no more. I trust you’re satisfied ;  
If not——

BRAGELONE.

Thou liest !

LAUZUN.

Nay, then, draw !

(*They fight—after a few passes, Lauzun is disarmed.*)

BRAGELONE.

There, take

Thy sword ! Alas, each slanderer wears a weapon  
No honest arm can baffle—*this is edgeless.*

[*Exit Bragelone.*]

LAUZUN.

Pleasant! This comes, now, of one's condescending  
To talk with men who cannot understand  
The tone of good society.—Poor fellow!

*Exit Lauzun.*

## SCENE II.

*Enter Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

He loves me then! He loves me! Love! wild word!  
Did I say love? Dishonor, shame, and crime  
Dwell on the thought! And yet—and yet—he loves me!  
(*Re-enter Bragelone, at the back of the stage,—She takes  
out the King's picture.*)

Mine early dreams were prophets!—Steps! The King!

BRAGELONE.

No, lady; pardon me!—a joint mistake;  
You sought the King—and I Louise La Valliere!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

You here, my Lord!—you here!

BRAGELONE.

There was a maiden  
Fairer than many fair; but sweet and humble,  
And good and spotless, through the vale of life,  
She walked, her modest path with blessing strewed;  
(For all men bless'd her;) from her crystal name,  
Like the breath i' the mirror, even envy passed:  
I sought that maiden at the court; none knew her.  
May I ask you—where now Louise la Valliere?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

Cruel!—unjust!—You were my father's friend,  
Dare you speak thus to me?

BRAGELONE.

Dare! dare!—"Tis well!

You have learnt your state betimes!—

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

My state, my Lord!

I know not by what right you thus assume  
The privilege of insult!

BRAGELONE.

Ay, reproach!

The harlot's trick—for shame! Oh, no, your pardon!  
You are too high for shame: and so—farewell!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

My Lord!—my Lord, in pity—No!—in *justice*,  
Leave me not thus!

BRAGELONE.

Louise!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE.

Have they belied me?

Speak, my good Lord!—What crime have I committed?

BRAGELONE.

No crime—at courts! 'Tis only Heaven and Honor.  
That deem it aught but—most admired good fortune!  
Many, who swept in careless pride before  
The shrinking, spotless, timorous La Valliere,  
Will now fawn round thee, and with bended knees  
Implore sweet favor of the King's kind mistress,  
Ha! ha!—this is not crime! Who calls it crime?

Do prudes say 'Crime?' Go bribe them, and  
they'll swear  
It's name is Greatness. Crime, indeed!—ha! ha!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

My heart finds words at length!—'tis false!

BRAGELONE.

'Tis false!

Why speak again! Say once more it is false—  
'Tis false!—again, 'tis false!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

O God I'm wretched!

BRAGELONE.

No lady, no! not wretched, if not guilty!

*(Mademoiselle de la Valliere, after walking to and fro in great agitation, seats herself on one of the benches of the garden, and covers her face with her hands.)*

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

Are these the tokens of remorse? No matter!  
I loved her well!—And love is pride, not love,  
If it forsake ev'n guilt amidst its sorrows!

*(Aloud)*

Louise! Louise!—Speak to thy friend, Louise!  
Thy father's friend!—thine own!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

This hated court!

Why came I hither?—Wherefore have I closed  
My heart against it's own most pleading dictates?  
Why clung to virtue, if the brand of vice  
Sear my good name?—

BRAGELONE.

That, when thou pray'st to God,  
Thy soul may ask for *comfort*—not *forgiveness*!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE (*rising eagerly.*)  
A blessed thought!—I thank thee!

BRAGELONE.

Thou art innocent!  
Thou hast denied the King?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

I *have* denied him!

BRAGELONE.

Curs'd be the lies that wrong'd thee!—doubly curst  
The hard, the icy selfishness of soul,  
That but to pander to an hour's caprice,  
Blasted that flower of life—fair fame! Accurst  
The King who casts his purple o'er his vices!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Hold!—thou malign'st thy king!

BRAGELONE.

He spared not thee

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

The king—God bless him!

BRAGELONE.

Wouldst thou madden me?  
Thou!—No—thou lov'st him not!—thou hid'st thy face!  
Woman, thou tremblest! Lord of Hosts, for this  
Hast thou preserved me from the foeman's sword,  
And through the incarnadined and raging seas  
Of war upheld my steps?—made life and soul  
The sleepless priests to that fair idol—Honor?

Was it for this?—I loved thee not, Louise,  
As gallants love! Thou wert this life's IDEAL,  
Breathing through earth the Lovely and the Holy,  
And clothing Poetry in human beauty!  
When in this gloomy world they spoke of sin,  
I thought of thee, and smiled—for thou wert sinless!  
And when they told of some diviner act  
That made our nature noble, my heart whispered—  
'So would have done Louise!'—'Twas thus I loved thee!  
To lose thee, I can bear it; but to lose,  
With thee, all hope, all confidence, of virtue—  
This—*this* is hard!--Oh! I am sick of earth!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

Nay, speak not thus!—be gentle with me. Come,  
I am not what thou deem'st me, Bragelone;  
Woman I am, and weak. Support, advise me!  
Forget the lover, but be still the friend.  
Do not desert me—*thou*!

BRAGELONE.

Thou lov'st the King!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

But I can fly from love!

BRAGELONE.

Poor child! And whither?

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

Take me to the old castle, to my mother!

BRAGELONE.

The king can reach thee there!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

He'll not attempt it.  
Alas! in courts, how quickly men forget!

BRAGELONE.

Not till their victim hath surrendered all !  
 Hadst thou but yielded, why thou mightst have lived  
 Beside his very threshold, safe, unheeded ;  
 But thus, with all thy bloom of heart unrifled,—  
 The fortress stormed, not conquered,—why man's pride,  
 If not man's lust, would shut thee from escape !  
 Art thou in earnest,—wouldst thou truly fly  
 From gorgeous infamy to tranquil honor,  
 God's house alone may shelter thee ?

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

The convent !

Alas ! alas ! to meet those eyes no more !  
 Never to hear that voice !

BRAGELONE (*departing.*)

Enough.

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

Yet, stay !

I'll see him once ! one last farewell—and then—  
 Yes, to the convent !

BRAGELONE.

I have done !—and yet,  
 Ere I depart, take back the scarf thou gav'st me.  
 Then didst 'thou honor worth !' now, gift and giver  
 Alike are worthless !

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

Worthless ! Didst thou hear me ?

Have I not said that——

BRAGELONE.

Thou wouldst see the King !  
 Vice first, and virtue after ! O'er the marge  
 Of the abyss thou tremblest ! One step more,  
 And from all heaven the Angels shall cry '*Lost !*'



Thou ask'st that single step!—Wouldst thou be saved,  
Lose not a moment!—Come!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere (*in great agony.*)

Beside that tree,  
When stars shone soft, he vowed for aye to love me!

BRAGELONE.

Think of thy mother! At this very hour  
She blesses God that thou wert born—the last  
Fair scion of a proud and stainless race!  
To-morrow, and thy shame may cast a shade  
Over a hundred 'scutcheons, and thy mother:  
Feel thou wert born that *she* might long to die!  
Come!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

I am ready—take my hand!

(*Her eye falls on the bracelet.*)

Away!

*This* is his gift! And shall I leave him thus?  
Not one kind word to break the shock of parting—

BRAGELONE.

And break a mother's heart!

MADemoiselle de la Valliere.

Be still! Thou'rt man!  
Thou canst not feel as woman feels!—her weakness  
Thou canst not sound! O Louis, Heaven protect thee!  
May Fate look on thee with La Valliere's eyes!  
Now I am ready, sir! Thou'st seen how weak  
Woman is ever where she loves. Now, learn,  
Proportioned to that weakness is the strength  
With which she conquers love!—O Louis! Louis!  
Quick!—take me hence!—

BRAGELONE.

The heart she wrongs hath saved her !  
 And is that all !—The shelter for mine age—  
 The Hope that was the garner for Affection—  
 The fair and lovely tree, beneath whose shade  
 The weary soldier thought to rest at last,  
 And watch life's sun go calm and cloudless down,  
 Smiling the day to sleep—all, all lie shattered !  
 No matter ! I have saved thy soul from sorrow,  
 Whose hideous depth thy vision cannot fathom.  
 Joy !—I have saved thee !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Ah ! when last we parted,  
 I told thee, of thy love I was not worthy.  
 Another shall replace me !

BRAGELONE (*smiling sadly.*)

Hush ! Another !  
 No !—See I wear thy colors still !—Though Hope  
 Wanes from the plate, the dial still remains  
 And takes no light from stars ! I—I am nothing !  
 But thou—Nay, weep not ! Yet these tears are honest :  
 Thou hast not lived to make the Past one blot,  
 Which life in vain would weep away ! Poor maiden !  
 I could not cheer thee *then*. Now, joy !—I've saved thee !  
 [*Exeunt Mademoiselle de la Valliere and Bragelone.*]

## SCENE III.

*The King's Cabinet at Fontainebleau; \* the King seated at a table, covered with papers, &c., writing.*

*Enter Lauzun.*

LOUIS.

Lauzun, I sent for you. Your zeal has served me,  
And I am grateful. There, this order gives you  
The lands and lordship of De Vesci.

LAUZUN.

Sire,  
How shall I thank your goodness?

LOUIS.

Hush!—by silence!

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

A king's forbidden fruit has pretty windfalls!

LOUIS.

This beautiful Louise! I never loved  
Till now.

LAUZUN.

She yields not yet?

\* To some it may be interesting to remember that this cabinet, in which the most powerful of the Bourbon kings is represented as rewarding the minister of his pleasures, is the same as that in which is yet shewn the table upon which Napoleon Bonaparte (son of a gentleman of Corsica) signed the abdication of the titles and the dominions of Charlemagne!

LOUIS.

But gives refusal  
A voice that puts ev'n passion to the blush  
To own one wish so soft a heart denies it!

LAUZUN.

A woman's No! is but a crooked path  
Unto a woman's Yes! Your Majesty  
Saw her to-day?

LOUIS.

No!—Grammont undertakes  
To bear, in secret, to her hand, some lines  
That pray a meeting.—I await his news.

*(Continues writing.)*

LAUZUN *(aside.)*

I'll not relate my tilt with Bragelone.  
First, I came off the worst.—No man of sense  
Ever confesses that! And, secondly,  
This most officious, curious, hot-brained Quixote  
Might make him jealous; jealous kings are peevish;  
And, if he fall to questioning the lady,  
She'll learn who told the tale, and spite the teller.  
Oh! the great use of logic!

LOUIS.

'Tis in vain  
I strive by business to beguile impatience!  
How my heart beats!—Well, Count!

*Enter Grammont.*

GRAMMONT.

Alas! my Liege!

LOUIS,

Alas!—Speak out!

GRAMMONT.

The court has lost La Valliere !

LOUIS.

Ha !—lost !

GRAMMONT

She has fled, and none guess whither.

LOUIS.

Fled !

I'll not believe it !—Fled !

LAUZUN.

What matters, Sire ?

No spot is sacred from the king !

LOUIS.

By Heaven

I *am* a king !—Not all the arms of Europe  
 Could wrest one jewel from my crown. And'she—  
 What is my crown to her ? I am a king !  
 Who stands between the king and her he loves  
 Becomes a traitor—and may find a tyrant !  
 Follow me !

[Exit Louis.]

GRAMMONT.

Who e'er heard of maids of honor  
 Flying from kings ?

LAUZUN.

Ah, had *you* been a maid,  
 How kind you would have been, you rogue !—Come on !  
 [Exeunt Lauzun and Grammont.]

## SCENE IV.

*Interior of a Convent Chapel; a lofty Crucifix in the centre of the aisle, before which kneels Mademoiselle de la Valliere; Night—Thunder and Lightning, the latter made visible through the long oriel windows.*

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIERE (*rising.*)

Darkly the night sweeps on. No thought of sleep  
Steals to my heart. What sleep is to the world  
Prayer is to me—life's balm, and grief's oblivion!  
Yet, ev'n before the altar of my God,  
Unhallowed fire is raging through my veins—  
Heav'n on my lips, but earth within my heart—  
And while I pray *his* memory prompts the prayer,  
And all I ask of Heaven is—'Guard my Louis!'  
Forget him—that I dare not pray! I would not,  
Ev'n if I could, be happy and forget him!

[*Thunder.*

Roll on, roll on, dark chariot of the storm.  
Whose wheels are thunder!—the rack'd elements  
Can furnish forth no tempest like the war  
Of passions in one weak and erring heart!

[*The bell tolls one.*

Hark to the night's funeral knell! How through the roar  
Of winds and thunder thrills that single sound,  
Solemnly audible!—the tongue of time,  
In time's most desolate hour!—it bids us muse  
On worlds which love can reach not! Life runs fast  
To its last sands! To bed, to bed!—to tears  
And wishes for the grave!—to bed, to bed!

[*A trumpet is heard without.*

*Two or three Nuns hurry across the stage.*

FIRST NUN.

Most strange!

## SECOND NUN.

In such a night, too! The great gates,  
That ne'er unclose save to a royal guest,  
Unbarred!

## MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

What fear, what hope, by turns distracts me!  
[*The trumpet sounds again.*]

## FIRST NUN.

Hark! in the court the ring of hoofs!—the door  
Creaks on the sullen hinge!

LAUZUN (*without.*)

Make way!—the King!

*Enter Louis and Lauzun.*

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE (*rusting forward.*)

Oh, Louis!—oh, beloved! (*Then pausing abruptly.*)

No, touch me not!

Leave me! in pity leave me! Heavenly Father,  
I fly to thee! Protect me from his arms—  
Protect me from myself!

[*Sinks at the foot of the crucifix.*]

## LOUIS.

Oh bliss!—Louise!

*Enter Abbess and other Nuns.*

## ABBESS.

Peace, peace! What clamor desecrates the shrine  
And solitudes of God?

## LAUZUN.

Madam, your knee—

The King!

ABBESS.

The King!—you mock me, sir!

LOUIS (*quitting Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*)

Behold

Your Sovereign, reverend Mother! We have come  
To thank you for the shelter of this lady,  
And to reclaim our charge.

ABBESS.

My Liege, these walls  
Are sacred even from the purple robe  
And sceptred hand.

LOUIS.

She has not ta'en the vow!  
She's free!—we claim her!—she is of our court!  
Woman—go to!

ABBESS.

The maiden, Sire, is free!  
Your royal lips have said it!—She is free!  
And if this shrine her choice, who'er compels her  
Forth from the refuge, doth incur the curse  
The Roman Church awards to even Kings!  
Speak, lady!—dost thou claim against the court  
The asylum of the cloister?

LOUIS.

Darest thou brave us?

LAUZUN (*aside to Louis.*)

Pardon, my liege!—reflect! Let not the world  
Say that the king—

LOUIS.

Can break his bonds!—Away!  
I was a man before I was a king!  
(*Approaching Mademoiselle de la Valliere.*)



Lady, we do command your presence! (*Lowering his voice.*) Sweet!

Adored Louise!—if ever to your ear  
My whispers spoke in music—if my life  
Be worth the saving, do not now desert me!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE. (*Clinging to the crucifix.*)

Let me not hear him, Heaven!—Strike all my senses!  
Make—make me dumb, deaf, blind,—but keep me honest!

ABBESS.

Sire you have heard her answer!

LOUIS (*advancing passionately, pauses, and then with great dignity.*)

Abbess, no!

This lady was entrusted to our charge—  
A fatherless child!—The King is now her father!  
Madam we would not wrong you; but we know  
That sometimes most unhallowed motives wake  
Your zeal for converts!—This young maid is wealthy,  
And nobly born!—Such proselytes may make  
A convent's pride, but oft a convent's victims!  
No more!—we claim the right the law awards us,  
Free and alone to commune with this maiden.  
If then her choice go with you—be it so;  
We are no tyrant! Peace!—retire!

ABBESS.

My Liege!

Forgive—

LOUIS.

We do!—Retire!

(*Lauzun, the Abbess, &c., withdraw.*)

LOUIS,

We are alone!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Alone!—No! God is present, and the conscience!

LOUIS.

Ah! fearest thou, then, that heart that would resign  
Ev'n love itself to guard one pang from thee?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE (*rising, but still with  
one arm clinging to the crucifix.*)

I *must* speak! Sire, if every drop of blood  
Were in itself a life, I'd shed them all  
For one hour's joy to thee! —But fame and virtue—  
My father's grave—my mother's lonely age—  
These, These—

(*Thunder.*)

*I hear their voice!*—the fires of Heaven  
Seem to me like the eyes of angels, and  
Warn me against myself!—Farewell.

LOUIS.

Louise,

I will not hear thee! What, farewell? that word  
Sounds like a knell to all that's worth the living!  
Farewell! why, then, farewell all peace to Louis  
And the poor King is once more but a thing  
Of state and forms. The impulse and the passion—  
The blessed air of happy human life—  
The all that made him envy not his subjects  
Dies in that word! Ah, canst thou—dar'st thou say it?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Oh, speak not thus!—Speak harshly!—threat; command!  
Be all the King!

LOUIS.

The King! he kneels to thee!

[*Lightning.*]

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Not there!—not at the cross!—the angry lightning  
See how it darts around! not there!

LOUIS (*passing his arm round her.*)

So ever

Would this heart guard thine own!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

In mercy leave me!  
I'm weak—be generous! My own soul betrays me;  
But *thou* betray me not!

LOUIS.

Nay, hear me, sweet one!—  
Desert me not this once, and I will swear  
To know no guiltier wish—to curb my heart—  
To banish hope from love—and nurse no dream  
Thy spotless soul itself shall blush to cherish?  
Hear me, Louise--thou lov'st me?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Love thee, Louis!

LOUIS.

Thou lov'st me,--then confide! Who loves, trusts ever!  
[*Mademoiselle de la Valliere has insensibly let go her  
hold of the cross, and now placing her hand on his  
arm, looks him in the face.*]

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

Trust thee!--ah! dare I?

LOUIS (*clasp ing her in his arms.*)

Aye, till death! What ho!

Lauzun! I say!

*Enter Lauzun.*

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIERE.

*[Endeavoring again to cling to the cross.]*

No, no !

LOUIS.

*Not trust me, dearest ?*

*[She falls on his shoulder—the Abbess and Nuns advance.]*

ABBESS.

Still firm !

LAUZUN.

No, Madam !—Way, there, for the King !

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

*An Ante-Chamber in the Palace of Madame la Duchesse de la Valliere at Versailles.*

*Enter Lauzun and Madame de Montespan, at opposite doors.*

LAUZUN.

Ha ! my fair friend, well met !—how fares Athens ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Weary with too much gaiety ! Now, tell me,  
Do *you* ne'er tire of splendor ? Does this round  
Of gaudy pomps—this glare of glit'ring nothings ;  
Does it ne'er pall upon you ? To my eyes  
'Tis as the earth would be if turfed with scarlet,  
Without one spot of green.

LAUZUN.

We all feel thus

Until we are used to it. Art has grown *my* nature,  
And if I see green fields, or ill-dressed people,  
I cry ' how artificial ! ' With me, ' *Nature* '  
Is ' Paris and Versailles. ' The word, ' a man, '  
Means something noble, that one sees at court.  
Woman's the thing Heaven made for wearing trinkets  
And talking scandal. That's my state of nature !  
You'll like it soon ; you have that temper which  
Makes courts its element.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And how?—define, Sir.

LAUZUN.

First, then---but shall I not offend?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Be candid.

I'd know my faults, to make them look like virtues.

LAUZUN.

First, then, Athene, you've an outward frankness;  
Deceit in you looks honester than truth.  
Thoughts, at a court, like faces on the stage,  
Require some rouge. You rouge your thoughts so well  
That one would deem their only fault, that nature  
Gave them too bright a bloom!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Proceed!

LAUZUN.

Your wit,  
Is of the true court breed—it plays with nothings;  
Just bright enough to warm, but never burn—  
Excites the dull, but ne'er offends the vain.  
You have much energy; it looks like feeling!  
Your cold ambition seems an easy impulse;  
Your head most ably counterfeits the heart,  
But never, like the heart, betrays itself!  
Oh! you'll succeed at court!—you see I know you!  
Not so this new made Duchess—young La Valliere.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The weak, fond fool!

LAUZUN.

Yes, weak—*she* has a heart;  
Yet *you*, too, love the King!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And she does *not*?

She loves but *Louis*—I but love the *King* :  
 Pomp, riches, state, and power—these who would  
 love not?

LAUZUN.

Bravo ! well said !—Oh you'll succeed at court !  
 I knew it well ! it was for this I chose you,  
 Induced your sapient lord to waste no more  
 Your beauty in the shade—for 'this prepared  
 The Duchess to receive you to her bosom,  
 Her dearest friend ; for this have duly fed  
 The King's ear with your praise, and cleared your way  
 To rule a sovereign and to share a throne.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

I know thou hast been my architect of power  
 And, when the pile is built—

LAUZUN. (*with a smile.*)

Could still o'erthrow it,  
 If thou couldst play the ingrate !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Il---nay !

LAUZUN.

Hear me !

Each must have need of each. Long live the King !  
 Still let his temples ache beneath the crown.  
 But all that kings can give—wealth, rank, and power—  
 Must be for *us*—the king's friend and his favorite.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

But is it easy to supplant the Duchess ?  
 All love La Valliere ! Her meek nature shrinks  
 Ev'n from our homage ; and she wears her state  
 As if she pray'd the world to pardon greatness.

LAUZUN.

And thus destroys herself! At court, Athene,  
 Vice, to win followers, takes the front of virtue,  
 And looks the dull plebeian things called *moral*  
 To scorn, until they blush to be unlike her.  
 Why is De Lauzun not her friend? Why plotting  
 For a new rival? Why?—Because De Lauzun  
 Wins not the power he looked for from her friendship!  
 She keeps not old friends!—and she make no new ones!  
 For who would be a friend to one, who deems it  
 A crime to ask his Majesty a favor?  
 ‘*Friends*,’ is a phrase at Court that means *Promotion*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Her folly I confess, would not be mine.  
 But, grant her faults—the King still loves the Duchess!

LAUZUN.

Since none are by, I’ll venture on a treason,  
 And say the King’s a man!—and men will change!  
 I have his ear, and you shall win his eye,  
 ‘Gainst a new face, and an experienced courtier,  
 What chance hath this poor loving simple woman?  
 Besides she has too much conscience for a king!  
 He likes not to look up, and feel how low,  
 Ev’n on the throne that overlooks the world,  
 His royal greatness dwarfs beside that heart  
 That never stooped to sin, save when it loved it!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You’re eloquent, my lord!

LAUZUN.

Ah! of such natures  
 You and I knew but little!—(*Aside*.) This must cease,  
 Or I shall all disclose my real aims!  
 (*Aloud*.) The King is with the Duchess?



MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Yes!

LAUZUN.

As yet

She doth suspect you not?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Suspect!—the puppet?

No; but full oft, her head upon my bosom,  
 Calls me her truest friend!—invites me ever  
 To amuse the King with my enlivening sallies,—  
 And still breaks off, in sighing o'er the past,  
 To wish her spirit were as blithe as mine,  
 And fears her Louis wearies of her sadness!

LAUZUN.

So, the plot ripens!—ere the King came hither,  
 I had prepared his royal pride to chafe  
 At that sad face, whose honest sorrow wears  
 Reproach unconsciously! You'll learn the issue!  
 Now, then, farewell!—we understand each other!

[Exit Lauzun.]

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And once I loved this man!—and still might love him,  
 But that I love ambition! Yes, my steps  
 Now need a guide; but once upon the height,  
 And I will have no partner! Thou, lord Duke,  
 With all thine insolent air of proud protection,  
 Thou shalt wait trembling on my nod, and bind  
 Thy fortune to my wheels! Oh man!—vain man!  
 Well sung the poet,—when this power of beauty  
 Heaven gave our sex, it gave the only sceptre  
 Which makes the world a slave! And I will wield it!

[Exit Madame de Montespan.]

SCENE II.

*The Scene opens and discovers the King and Madame de la Valliere at chess.*

LOUIS.

But one move more!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Not so! I check the king!

LOUIS.

A vain attempt!—the king is too well guarded!  
There check again! Your game is lost!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

As usual,

Ev'n from this mimic stage of war you rise  
Ever the victor

*(They leave the table and advance.)*

LOUIS.

'Twere a fairer fortune,  
My own Louise, to reconcile the vanquished!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE *(sadly.)*

My best-loved Louis!

LOUIS.

Why so sad a tone?

Nay, smile, Louise!—love thinks himself aggrieved  
If care cast shadows o'er the heart it seeks  
To fill with cloudless sunshine! Smile, Louise!  
Ev'n unkind words were kinder than sad looks.  
There—*now* thou glad'st me!

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Yet ev'n thou, methought,  
 Did'st wear, this morn, a brow on which the light  
 Shone less serenely than its wont !

## LOUIS.

This morn !

Ay, it is true !—this morn I heard that France  
 Hath lost a subject monarchs well might mourn !  
 Oh ! little know the world how much a king,  
 Whose life is past in *purchasing* devotion,  
 Loses in one who merited all favor  
 And scorned to ask the least ! A king Louise,  
 Sees but the lackeys of mankind. The true  
 Lords of our race—the high chivalric hearts—  
 Nature's nobility—alas ! are proud,  
 And stand aloof, lest slaves should say they flatter !  
 Of such a mould was he whom France deplores.

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Tell me his name, that I, with thee, may mourn him,

## LOUIS.

A noble name, but a more noble bearer ;  
 Not to be made by, but to make, a lineage.  
 Once, too, at Dunkirk, 'twixt me and the foe,  
 He thrust his gallant breast, already seared  
 With warrior-wounds, and his blood flowed for mine.—  
 Dead !—his just merits all unrecompensed !—  
 Obscured, like sun-light, by the suppliant clouds !  
 He should have died a marshal ! Death did wrong  
 To strike so soon ! Alas, brave Bragelone !

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ha !—did I hear aright, my liege—my Louis ?  
 That name—that name !—thou saidst not ' Bragelone ?

LOUIS.

Such was his name, not often heard at court.  
Thou didst not know him? What! thou art pale!—thou  
weepest!—

Thou art ill! Louise, look up!

*[He leads her to a seat.]*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Be still, O Conscience!

I did not slay him—died *too soon*! Alas!  
He should have died with all his hopes unblighted,  
Ere I was—what I am!

LOUIS.

What mean these words?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

How did death strike him?—what disease?

LOUIS.

I know not.

He had retired from service; and in peace  
Breathed out his soul to some remoter sky!  
France only guards his fame! What was he to thee  
That thou shouldst weep for him?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Hast thou ne'er heard

We were betrothed in youth?

LOUIS (*agitated and aside.*)

Lauzun speaks truth!

I'd not her virgin heart—she lov'd another!  
(*Aloud*) Betrothed! You mourn him deeply!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire, I do!

That broken heart!—I was its dream—its idol!  
And with regret is mingled—what repentance!

LOUIS (*coldly.*)

Repentance, Madam! Well, the word is gracious!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Pardon! oh, pardon! But the blow was sudden;  
How can the heart play courtier with remorse?

LOUIS.

Remorse!—again. Why be at once all honest,  
And say you love me not!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Not love you, Louis?

LOUIS.

Not if you feel repentance to have loved!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

What thinkst thou, Louis, I should love thee more  
Did I love virtue less, or less regret it?

LOUIS.

I pray you truce with these heroic speeches;  
They please us in romance—in life they weary.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Louis, do I deserve this?

LOUIS.

Rather, Lady,

Do I deserve the mute reproach of sorrow?  
Still less these constant, never-soothed complaints—  
This waiting woman jargon of '*lost virtue.*'

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire, this from you?

LOUISE.

Why, oft—could others bear thee—  
Well might they deem thee some poor village Phoebe,  
Whom her false Lubin had deceived, and left,  
Robb'd of her only dower! and not the great  
Duchess la Valliere, in our realm of France  
Second to none but our anointed race;  
The envy of the beauty and the birth  
Of Europe's court—our city of the world!  
Is it so great disgrace, Louise la Valiere,  
To wear, unrivalled, in thy breast, the heart  
Of Bourbon's latest, nor her least, of Kings.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire, when you deigned to love me, I had hoped  
You knew the sunshine of your royal favor  
Had fallen on a lowly flower. Let others  
Deem that the splendor consecrates the sin!  
I'd loved thee with as pure and proud a love,  
If thou hadst been the poorest cavalier  
That ever served a King,—thou know'st it, Louis!

LOUIS.

I would not have it so? my fame, my glory,  
The purple and the orb, are part of me;  
And thou shouldst love them for my sake, and feel  
I were not Louis were I less the King.  
Still weeping! Fie! I tell thee tears freeze back  
The very love I still would bear to thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Would 'still!'—didst thou say 'still'?

LOUIS.

Come, lady!

Woman, to keep her empire o'er the heart,  
Must learn its nature—mould unto its bias—  
And rule, by never differing from our humors.

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I'll school my features, teach my lips to smile,  
Be all thou wilt; but say not '*still*,' dear Louis!

## LOUIS.

Well, well! no further words; let peace be with us.  
(*Aside.*)

By Heaven, she weeps with yet intenser passion!  
It must be that she loved this Bragelone,  
And mourns the loftier fate that made her mine!

(*Aloud.*)

This gallant soldier, Madam, your betrothed,  
Hath some share in your tears?

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Oh, name him not;  
My tears are all unworthy dews to fall  
Upon a tomb so honored!

## LOUIS.

Grant me patience!  
These scenes are very tedious, fair La Valliere.  
In truth, we kings have, in the council chamber,  
Enough to make us tearful;—in the bower  
We would have livelier subjects to divert us.

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Again forgive me! I am sick at heart;  
I pray you pardon;—these sad news have marred  
The music of your presence, and have made me  
Fit but for solitude. I pray you, Sire,  
Let me retire; and when again I greet you,  
I'll wear the mien you'd have me!

## LOUIS.

Be it so!  
Let me no more disturb you from your thoughts;  
They must be sad. So brave—and your betrothed!  
Your grief becomes you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

You forgive me, Louis ?

We do not part unkindly ?

LOUIS.

Fair one, no !

[*Exit La Valliere.*

LOUIS.

She was my first love, and my fondest.—*Was !*

Alas, the word must come !—I love her yet,

But love wanes glimmering to that twilight—friendship !

Grant that she never loved this Bragelone ;

Still, tears and sighs make up dull interludes

In passion's short-lived drama ! She is good,

Gentle, and meek,—and I do think she loves me,

(A truth no King is sure of !)—But, in fine,

I have begun to feel the hours are long

Pass'd in her presence ; what I hotly sought

Coldly I weary of. I'll seek De Lauzun :

I like his wit—I almost like his knavery ;

It never makes us yawn, like high-flown virtues.

Thirst, hunger, rest—these are the wants of peasants :

A courtier's wants are titles, place and gold ;

But a poor king, who has these wants so sated,

Has only one want left—to be amused !

[*Exit Louis.*

### SCENE III.

*Re-enter the Duchess de la Valliere.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Louis ! dear Louis !—Gone ! alas !—and left me  
Half in displeasure !—I was wrong, methinks,



To—no!—I was not wrong to *feel* remorse,  
But *wrong* to give it utterance!

*Enter Madame de Montespan.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What! alone,  
Fair friend! I thought the King——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Has gone, in anger;  
Cold, and in anger.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What, with *thee*, dear Lady  
On the smooth surface of that angel meekness  
I should have thought no angry breath could linger.  
But men and kings are——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Hush! I was to blame.  
The King's all goodness. Shall I write to him?  
Letters have not our looks—and, oh, one look!  
How many hardest hearts one look hath won  
A life consumed in words has wooed in vain!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To-night there is high revel at the court;  
There you may meet your truant King.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

To night!  
An age!—How many hours to night?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You know  
My office makes my home the royal palace;  
I serve the Queen, and thus shall see your Louis  
Ere the sun set.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

You!—happy you!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perchance,  
(The King is ever gracious to your friends,  
And knows me of the nearest,) I might whisper,  
Though with less sweet a tone, your message to him,  
And be your dove, and bear you back the olive?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

My kind Athene!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Nay, 'tis yours the kindness,  
To wear my love so near your heart, But, tell me,  
Since you accept my heraldry, the cause  
Of strife between you in this court of Love.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Alas! I know not—save that I offended!  
The wherefore boots the heart that loves to know?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Not much, I own, the poor defendant—woman,  
But much the advocate; I need the brief.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Methinks his kingly nature chafes to see  
It cannot rule the conscience as the heart;  
But, tell him, ever henceforth I will keep  
Sad thoughts for lonely hours.—Athene, tell him,  
That if he smile once more upon Louise,  
The smile shall never pass from that it shines on;  
Say—but I'll write myself.

*(Sits down to the table and writes.)*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN. (*aside.*)

What need of schemes—  
Lauzun's keen wit—Athene's plotting spirit?  
She weaves herself the web that shall ensnare her!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

There; back these feeble words with all thy beauty,  
Thy conquering eyes, and thy bewitching smile.  
Sure never suit can fail with such a pleader!  
And now a little while to holier sadness,  
And thine accusing memory, Bragelone!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Whom speak you of?—the hero of the Fronde?  
Who seemed the last of the old Norman race,  
And half-preserved to this degenerate age  
The lordly shape the ancient Bayards wore?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

You praise him well! He was my father's friend,  
And should have been his son. We were affianced,  
And—but no more! Ah! cruel, cruel Louis!  
You mourned for him—how much more cause have I!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN. (*quickly.*)

What! he is dead? your grief the king resented?  
Knew he your troth had thus been plighted?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

And still he seemed to deem it sin to mourn him!

Yes;

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

A clue—another clue—that I will follow,  
Until it lead me to the throne! — (*Aloud.*) Well, cheer  
thee;

Trust your true friend; rely on my persuasion.  
Methinks I never tasked its powers till now.

Farewell, and fear not! Oh! I'll plead your cause,  
As if myself the client!—(*Aside*) Thou art sentenced!

[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

'Tis a sweet solace still to have a friend—  
A friend in *woman*! O, to what a reed  
We bind our destinies, when man we love!  
Peace, honor, conscience lost—if I lose him,  
What have I left? How sinks my heart within me!  
I'll to my chamber; there the day of tears  
Learns night to smile!—*And I'm the thing they envy!*  
[*Exit Duchess de la Valliere.*]

#### SCENE IV.

*The Gardens of Versailles—Lauzun, Grammont, and  
Courtiers.*

LAUZUN.

'Tis now the hour our royal master  
Honors the ground of his rejoicing gardens  
By his illustrious footsteps!—there, my lords,  
That is the true style-courtier!

\* In representation, the actress who may perform the *Duchess de la Valliere* will pardon me for observing, that the words in *italic* should be said, not *ironically*, but with a kind of sad and patient wonder. She should appear lost in amazed abstraction at the contrast between her real feelings and the envy she excites, and wake from it with a slight start and smile. And, in one word, now that I am on that subject, the actress should remember that the very soul of La Valliere's character is simplicity; and that there are few passages in which the *natural* tone of voice will not be more suitable and more effective than the declamatory.

GRAMMONT.

Out upon you!

Your phrase would suit some little German prince,  
 Of fifteen hundred quarterings and five acres,  
 And not the world's great Louis! 'Tis the hour  
 When Phoebus shrinks abashed, and all the stars  
 Envy the day that it beholds the King!

(*To them, Marquis de Montespan, in bright scarlet hose.*)

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

Most beautiful! You have a turn of thought,  
 A taste, a sentiment, so chaste and noble!  
 Oh, I am charmed!—I'm ravished!

LAUZUN.

You here, Marquis!

Why, you make Grammont blush. Such praise from you  
 Will turn his bashful brain! Dear Montespan,  
 You are the glass of fashion! Heavens, what stockings!  
 The exquisite man!

MONTESPAN.

I'faith, methinks they're pretty.

LAUZUN.

Pretty!—if I were married, 'troth, my Duchess  
 Should keep her train at a respectful distance;  
 You'd set it on a blaze! You walk the earth  
 Like Cupid mounted on a pair of flambeaux!  
 Oh, you're a dangerous man!

MONTESPAN.

So says my wife,

And begs me not to come too near her—lest  
 She love me too outrageously! At courts,  
 People of quality must be decorous;  
 'Tis not the mode to seem adored too much!

LAUZUN.

Your wife's an angel! *Apropos*, dear Marquis;  
You see a friend's advice was worth the taking;  
Your lady's all the rage;—the King admires her.

MONTESPAN.

The King—hum!—now I know not which I ought to  
Be,—in despair, or ravished.

LAUZUN.

You're not jealous?

MONTESPAN.

Zounds!—jealous!—no!

LAUZUN.

No Marquis can be jealous!

MONTESPAN.

Not of a count or baron; but a king!  
S'death, if I thought it—were my honor touched,  
An' it were fifty kings—

*Enter Louis.*

LOUIS.

Good day, my Lords!  
Pray you be covered. Well!—what says the Marquis  
Of fifty kings?

MONTESPAN.

I—I—I'm in despair!

LAUZUN.

That fifty kings would never make one Louis!

LOUIS.

Go to, thou flatterer! Harkye, dear De Lauzun.

[*Exeunt the Courtiers, as the King takes Lauzun aside.*]

MONTESPAN (*Aside.*)

My wife said right; this worthy duke has got  
The true court politesse!—He lies divinely!

[*Exit Montespan.*]

LAUZUN.

This Montespan I own is wondrous silly;  
But he has one good quality—his wife!

LOUIS.

That's true!—a charming face!

LAUZUN.

Ah! had she heard you,  
Your Majesty had made one blissful subject.

LOUIS.

Nay, Lauzun, nay!

LAUZUN.

Her soul is like the Persian,  
And on the loftiest eminence hath built  
A shrine of fire. But pardon me my liege;  
I had forgot, your royal taste prefers  
Natures that love less warmly—though as well.

LOUIS.

Hem!—But in truth, this lady's worth the loving;  
And, by mine honor, while we speak, she comes!  
A happy fortune.

*Enter Madame de Montespan.*

LAUZUN (*archly.*)

Sire, may I withdraw?

LOUIS.

Some message from the Queen; why—as thou wilt.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

Methinks it may be as I will!

[*Exit Lauzun.*]

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

(*Appearing for the first time to perceive Louis.*)

The King!

(*Salutes him and passes on.*)

LOUIS.

Fair Madam, we had hoped you with you brought  
Some bright excuse to grace our cheerless presence  
With a less short-lived light! You dawn upon us  
Only to make us more regret your setting.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Sire, if I dared, I would most gladly hail  
A few short moments to arrest your presence,  
And rid me of a soft yet painful duty.

LOUIS.

'Tis the first time, be sure, so sweet a voice  
E'er crav'd a sanction for delighting silence.  
Speak on, we pray thee!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Gracious Sire, the Duchess,  
Whom you have lately left, she fears in anger,  
Besought me to present this letter to you.

LOUIS (*takes the letter, and aside.*)

She blushes while she speaks!—'Tis passing strange,  
I ne'er remarked those darkly-dreaming eyes,  
That melt in their own light!

(*Reads, and carelessly puts up the letter.*)

It scarcely suits



Her dignity, and ours, to choose a witness  
To what hath chanced between us. She is good ;  
But her youth, spent in some old country castle,  
Knows not the delicate spirit of a court.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

She bade me back her suit. Alas ! my Liege,  
Who can succeed, if fair La Valliere fail ?

LOUIS.

She bade thee ?—she was prudent ! Were I woman,  
And loved, I'd not have chosen such a herald.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Love varies in its colors with all tempers ;  
The Duchess is too proud to fear a rival,  
Too beautiful to find one. May I take  
Some word of comfort back to cheer her sadness ?  
Made doubly deep by thoughts of your displeasure,  
And grief for a dear friend.

LOUIS.

Aye, *that's* the sadness !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

He was a gallant lord, this Bragelone,  
And her betrothed. Perchance in youth she loved him,  
Ere the great sun had quenched the morning star !

LOUIS.

She loved him !—think'st thou so ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Indeed I know not ;  
But I have heard her eloquent in praise,  
And seen her lost in woe. You will forgive her !

LOUIS.

Forgive her ?—there's no cause !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Now, bless you, Sire,  
For that one word. My task is done.

LOUIS.

Already?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What can I more? Oh, let me hasten back!  
What rapture must be hers who can but fill  
An atom of the heart of godlike Louis!  
How much more the whole soul!—To lose thy love  
Must be not grief, but some sublime despair  
Like that the Roman felt who lost a world!

LOUIS.

By Heaven, she fires me!—a brave, royal spirit,  
Worthy to love a king!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To know thee hers,  
What pride!--what glory! Though all earth cried 'Shame!'  
Earth could not still the trumpet at her heart,  
That, with its swelling and exultant voice,  
Told her the earth was but the slave of Louis,  
And *she* the partner! And, O hour of dread!  
When (for the hour must come) some fairer form  
Shall win thee from her—still, methinks, 'twould be  
A boast to far posterity to point  
To all the trophies piled about thy throne,  
And say—'He loved me once!'—O Sire, your pardon;  
I am too bold.

LOUIS.

Why, this were love, indeed,  
Could we but hope to win it. And such love  
Would weave the laurel in its wreaths of myrtle.  
Beautiful lady! while thou speak'st, I dream

What love should be,—and feel where love is not !  
Thou com'st the suitor, to remain the judge ;  
And I could kneel to thee for hope and mercy.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Ah, no !—ah, no !—she is my friend. And if  
She love not as I love—I mean, I *might* love—  
Still she *believes* she loves thee. Tempt me not.  
Who could resist thee ! Sire, farewell !

[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*]

LOUIS.

Her voice

Is hush'd ; but still its queen-like music lingers  
In my rapt ears. I dreamt Louise had loved me ;  
She who felt love disgrace ! Before the true,  
How the tame counterfeit grows pale and lifeless.  
By the sad brow of yon devout La Valliere  
I feel a man, and fear myself a culprit !  
But this high spirit wakes in mine the sense  
Of what it is—I *am* that Louis whom  
The world has called 'The Great !'—and in her pride  
Mirror mine own. This jaded life assumes  
The zest, the youth, the glory of *excitement* !  
To-night we meet again ;—speed fast, dull hours !

[*Exit Louis.*]

## SCENE V.

*Grand Saloon in the Palace of Versailles ; in the back ground the suit of Apartments is seen in perspective—the Queen seated to the left of the stage ; some of the Ladies of the blood royal seated also, but on stools—many Ladies standing round.*

*Several Ladies enter, one by one salute the Queen, and pass on to the front of the stage—the Queen half rises to each, and appears to address them in passing, but in dumb show.*

FIRST LADY.

How graciously the Queen receives the Guiches !

SECOND LADY.

See, fair La Tremouille's again in favor !

THIRD LADY.

Hush ! Lo, the star that rarely gilds the nights  
Of the court-heaven—the beautiful La Valliere !

*Enter the Duchess de la Valliere—salutes the Queen,  
who half turns her back upon her in silence.*

FIRST LADY.

Saw you the Queen's marked rudeness ?

SECOND LADY.

Tush ! the Queen  
Is but a cypher ! 'tis the King alone  
Whose smile makes up the sum of royal favor.

## THIRD LADY.

You're right ; and while that smile is still La Vallière's,  
*She* is the real Queen. How say you, Ladies ?  
 Shall we not pay our court to her ?

*(The Ladies crowd round the Duchess, and appear  
 to render her the most reverential homage, which  
 she receives with humility and embarrassment.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE. *(aside.)*

These smiles

Cannot efface that injured woman's frown.

Oh, how the heart that wrong'd avenges her !

*Enter Lauzun, Marquis de Montespan, and several  
 Courtiers, who, after saluting the Queen, surround  
 the Duchess de la Valliere with still greater homage.*

## FIRST COURTIER.

*(Approaching the Duchess de la Valliere.)*

Madam, your goodness is to France a proverb !  
 If I might dare request, this slight memorial  
 You would convey to our most gracious Master ?  
 The rank of colonel in the royal guard  
 Is just now vacant. True, I have not served ;  
 But I do trust my valor is well known :  
 I've killed three noted swordsmen in a duel !—  
 And, for the rest, a word from you were more  
 Than all the laurels Holland gave to others.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

My Lord, forgive me ! I might ill deserve  
 The friendship of a monarch, if, forgetting  
 That honors are the attributes of merit ;—  
 And they who sell the service of the public  
 For the false coin, soft smiles and honeyed words,  
 Forge in the ante-chambers of a palace.

Defraud a people to degrade a king!  
If you have merits, let *them* plead for you;  
Nor ask in whispers what you claim from justice.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*to first Courtier, as the  
Duchess de la Valliere turns away.*)

Give me the paper. Hush! the King shall see it.

*Music.*

*Enter the King, Grammont, and other Courtiers. He  
pauses by the Queen, and accosts her respectfully in  
dumb show.*

GRAMMONT (*aside.*)

With what a stately and sublime decorum  
His Majesty throws grandeur o'er his foibles!  
He not disguises vice; but makes vice kingly—  
Most gorgeous of all sensualists!

LAUZUN.

How different  
His royal rival in the chase of pleasure,  
The spendthrift, sauntering, Second Charles of England!

GRAMMONT.

Ay, Jove to Comus!

LAUZUN.

Silence! Jove approaches!

(*The Queen rises, the crowd breaks up into groups;  
the King passes slowly from each till he joins the  
Duchess de la Valliere; the Courtiers retire.*)

LOUIS.

Why, this is well. I thank you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

And forgive me ?

LOUIS.

Forgive you ! You mistake me ; wounded feeling  
Is not displeasure. Let this pass, Louise.  
Your lovely friend has a most heavenly smile !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

And a warm heart. In truth, my Liege, I'm glad  
You see her with my eyes.

LOUIS.

You have no friend  
Whose face it glads me more to look upon.

*(Aside, and gazing on Montespan.)*

*(What thrilling eyes !)*—*(Aloud.)* My thanks are due to  
her,

For, with the oil of her mellifluous voice,  
Smoothing the waves the passing breeze had ruffled.

*(Joins Madame de Montespan and leads her through  
the crowd to the back of the stage.)*

LAUZUN. *(to Marquis de Montespan.)*

There ! Are you ravished, Marquis ?

MONTESPAN.

Hum !

LAUZUN.

The King

Is very condescending to your lady !

MONTESPAN.

Oh, mighty condescending ! How he eyes her !

LAUZUN.

'Tis all for love of you.

MONTESPAN.

I shall despair

If the King mean me shame !

LAUZUN.

He means you honor.

O what a great man you will be, dear Marquis.

\* Do not forget your friends !

MONTESPAN.

I must be ravished !

*(Lauzun leaves Montespan, who mingles with the crowd, and should keep out of sight for the rest of the scene, and joins the Duchess de la Valliere.)*

LAUZUN.

Your Grace resolves no more to be content  
Eclipsing others. You eclipse yourself.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I thought you were a friend, and not a flatterer.

LAUZUN.

Friendship would lose its dearest privilege  
If friendship were forbidden to admire !  
Why, ev'n the King admires your Grace's friend,—  
Told me to-day she was the loveliest lady  
The court could boast. Nay, see how, while they speak  
He gazes on her. How his breathing fans  
The locks that shade the roses of her cheek !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ha ! Nay, be still, my heart.

LAUZUN.

It is but friendship ;

But it looks wondrous warm !



DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

He cannot mean it!  
And yet—and yet he lingers on her hand—  
He whispers!

LAUZUN.

How the gossips gaze and smile!  
There'll be much scandal.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Lauzun!—what!—thou thinks't not?  
No, no, thou canst not think—

LAUZUN.

That courts know treachery,  
That women are ambitious, or men false;  
I will not think it. Pshaw!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

My brain swims round!  
Louis, of late, hath been so changed. How fair  
She looks to-night!—and, oh, *she* has not fallen!  
He comes—he nears us—he has left her. Fie!  
My foolish fancies wronged him!

LAUZUN.

The spell works.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

*(As the King quits her, to first Courtier, giving him back  
the paper.)*

My Lord, your suit is granted

FIRST COURTEIR.

Blessings Madam!  
*The other Courtiers come round him.*

SECOND COURTIER.

Her influence must be great. I know three dukes  
Most pressing for the post.

THIRD COURTIER.

A rising sun,  
Worthier of worship than that cold La Valliere.  
The King as well, methinks, might have no mistress,  
As one by whom no courtier grew the richer.

(*The Courtiers group round Madame de Montespan.*)

LOUIS.

My Lords you do remember the bright lists  
Which, in the place termed thenceforth '*The Carrousel*,'\*  
We sometime held?—a knightly tournament,  
That brought us back the age of the first Francis!

LAUZUN.

Of all your glorious festivals, the greatest!  
Who but remembers?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*aside.*)

*Then* he wore my colors.  
How kind to bring back to my yearning heart  
That golden spring-time of our early loves!

LOUIS.

Next week we will revive the heroic pageant.  
Proud plumes shall wave and levelled spears be shivered;  
Ourself will take the lists, and do defy  
The chivalry of our renowned France,  
In honor of that lady of our court

\* The *Place du Carrousel* was so named from a splendid festival given by Louis. On the second day, devoted to knightly games, the King who appeared in the character of *Roger*, carried off four prizes. All the crown jewels were prodigalized on his arms and the trappings of his horse.

For whom we wear the colors, and the motto  
Which suits her best—*Most bright where all are  
brilliant !*

GRAMMONT.

Oh, a most kingly notion !

LOUIS.

Ere we part,  
Let each knight choose his colors and his lady.  
Ourselves have set the example.

*(The Courtiers mingle with the Ladies, &c., many  
Ladies give their colors.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE *(timidly)*.

Oh, my Louis !

I read thy heart ; thou hast chosen this device  
To learn thy poor La Valliere to be proud.  
Nay, turn not from my blessings. Once before  
You wore my colors, though I gave them not.  
To-night I give them !—Louis loves me still !  
*(Takes one of the knots from her breast, and presents it.)*

LOUIS.

Lady, the noblest hearts in France would beat  
More high beneath your badge. Alas ! my service  
Is vowed already *here*.

*(Turning to Madame de Montespan, and placing a knot  
of her colors over his order of the Saint Esprit.)*

These are my colors !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

How ! how !

*The King converses apart with Madame de Mon-  
tespan.*

LAUZUN (*to the Duchess de la Valliere.*)

By calm, your Grace; a thousand eyes  
Are on you. Give the envious crowd no triumph.  
Ah! had *my* fortune won so soft a heart  
I would have——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Peace!—Away! Betrayed—Undone.

END OF ACT III.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*The Gardens at Versailles.*

*Enter Lauzun.*

LAUZUN.

So far, so prosperous! From the breast of Louis,  
The blooming love it bore so long a summer,  
Falls like a fruit o'er-ripe; and, in the court,  
And o'er the King, this glittering Montespan  
Queens it without a rival,—awes all foes,  
And therefore makes all friends. State, office, honors,  
Reflect her smile, or fade before her frown.  
So far, so well! Enough for Montespan.  
For Lauzun now!—I love this fair La Valliere,  
As well, at least, as woman's worth the loving;  
And if the jewel has one trifling flaw,  
The gold 'tis set in will redeem the blemish.  
The King's no niggard lover; and her wealth  
Is vast. I have the total in my tablets—  
(Besides estates in Picardy and Provence.)  
I'm very poor—my debtors very pressing.  
I've robbed the Duchess of a faithless lover,  
To give myself a wife, and her a husband.  
Wedlock's a holy thing,—and wealth a good one!

*Enter Marquis de Montespan.*

MONTESPAN.

O Duke, behold a miserable man!

LAUZUN.

What ! in despair ?

MONTESPAN.

Despair, sir !—that's a thing  
That happens every hour ! But this——

LAUZUN.

Take breath.

What is the matter ?

MONTESPAN.

Banished from the court !

LAUZUN.

Banished ? For what offence ?

MONTESPAN.

Because the King  
Complains my wife's an angel ! and declares  
Her health will be affected by my temper.  
My temper !—I'm a lamb !

LAUZUN.

Perhaps the King

Is jealous of you ?

MONTESPAN.

On my life you've hit it !  
And yet I never gave him any cause !

*Enter Louis.*

LOUIS (*to Marquis de Montespan.*)

You, my Lord, in the precincts of our palace !—  
This is too daring.

MONTESPAN.

Oh, your Majesty,  
I do beseech your grace. I am most sorry  
To have a wife so good. 'Tis not my fault, Sire.

LOUIS.

Silence my Lord! Your strange and countless follies—  
The scenes you make—your loud domestic broils—  
ring scandal on our court. Decorum needs  
Your banishment; or, since you cannot live  
With your fair lady in harmonious concord,  
Leave her in peace, and live alone!

MONTESPAN.

Alas!

There is no broil,

LAUZUN (*Aside.*)

What, contradict the King!

MONTESPAN.

My wife and I are doves!

LOUIS.

You *must* perceive  
That it were best for both to break a chain  
You both abhor.

MONTESPAN.

I swear——

LOUIS.

Peace, Marquis! Go!  
And for your separate household, which entails  
A double cost, our treasury shall accord you  
A hundred thousand crowns.

MONTESPAN.

O generous Monarch

LOUIS.

Mind, your poor lady, from this hour is free.  
No more. Your exile is revoked. Good day, sir !

MONTESPAN.

A hundred thousand crowns !

LAUZUN.

Begone !

MONTESPAN.

I'm ravished !

[*Exit Marquis de Montespan.*]

LOUIS.

A fool, well rid of. Strange that such a dolt  
Should e'er be mated with the bright Athene.  
Pleasure is never stagnant in her presence ;  
But every breeze of woman's changeful skies  
Ripples the stream and freshens e'en the sunshine.

LAUZUN.

'Tis said, your Majesty, 'that contrast's sweet,'  
And she you speak of well contrasts another,  
Whom once——

LOUIS.

I loved ; and still devoutly honor.  
This poor La Valliere !—could we will affection,  
I would have never changed. And even now  
I feel Athene has but charmed my senses,  
And my void heart still murmurs for Louise !  
I would we could be friends, since now not lovers,  
Nor dare be happy while I know her wretched.

LAUZUN.

Wearies she still your Majesty with prayers,  
Tender laments, and passionate reproaches ?



LOUIS.

Her love outlives its hopes.

LAUZUN.

An irksome task  
To witness tears we cannot kiss away,  
And with cold friendship freeze the ears of love !

LOUIS.

Most irksome and most bootless !

LAUZUN.

Haply, Sire,  
In one so pure, the charm of wedded life  
Might lull keen griefs to rest, and curb the love  
Thou fly'st from to the friendship that thou seekest ?

LOUIS.

I've thought of this. The Duke de Longueville loves her,  
And hath besought before her feet to lay  
His princely fortunes.

LAUZUN (*quickly.*)

Ha !—and she——

LOUIS.

Rejects him.

LAUZUN,

Sire, if love's sun, once set, bequeaths a twilight,  
'Twould only hover o'er some form whom chance  
Had linked with Louis—some one (though unworthy)  
Whose presence took a charm from brighter thoughts  
That knit it with the past.

LOUIS.

Why, how now, Duke !—  
Thou speak'st not of thyself ?

LAUZUN:

I dare not, Sire !

LOUIS.

Ha ! ha !—poor Lauzun !—what ! the soft la Valliere  
Transfer her sorrowing heart to thee ! Ha ! ha !

LAUZUN.

My name is not less noble than De Longueville's ;  
My glory greater, since the world has said  
Louis esteems me more.

LOUIS.

*Esteems ! No !—favors !*

And thou dost think that she, who shrunk from love,  
Lest love were vice, would wed the wildest Lord  
That ever laughed at virtue ?

LAUZUN.

Sire, you wrong me ;

Or else you (pardon me) condemn yourself.  
Is it too much for one the King calls friend  
To aspire to one the King has called——

LOUIS.

Sir, hold !

I never so malign'd that hapless Lady  
As to give *her* the title only due  
To such as Montespan, who glories in it—  
The *last* my mistress ; but the first my victim :  
A nice distinction, taught not in your logic,  
Which, but just now, confused esteem and favor.  
Go to ! we, kings are not the dupes you deem us.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

So high ! I'll win La Valliere to avenge me,  
And humble this imperial vanity.

(*Aloud.*)

Sire, I offend ! Permit me to retire,  
And mourn your anger ; nor presume to guess  
Whence came the cause. And, since it seems your *favor*  
Made me aspire too high, in that I loved  
Where you, Sire, made love noble, and half-dreamed  
*Might be*—nay, *am* not—wholly there disdained—

LOUIS.

How, Duke!

LAUZUN.

I do renounce at once  
The haughty vision, Sire, permit my absence.

LOUIS.

Lauzun, thou hintest that, were suit allowed thee,  
La Valliere might not scorn it—is it so?

LAUZUN.

I crave your pardon, Sire.

LOUIS.

Must I ask twice?

LAUZUN.

I do believe then, Sire, with time and patience,  
The Duchess might be won to—not reject me!

LOUIS.

Go, then, and prove thy fortune. We permit thee.  
And, if thou prosperest, why then love's a riddle,  
And woman is—no matter! Go, my Lord;  
We did not mean to wound thee. So, forget it!  
Woo when thou wilt—and wear what thou canst win.

LAUZUN.

My gracious Liege, Lauzun commends him to thee;  
And if one word, he merit not, may wound him,  
He'll think of favors words can never cancel.  
Memory shall med'cine to his present pain.  
God save you, Sire!—(*Aside.*) To be the dupe I deem  
you!

*Exit Lauzun.*

LOUIS.

I love her not ; and yet, methinks, am jealous !  
 Lauzun is wise and witty—knows the sex.  
 What if she do ?—No ! I will not believe it.  
 And what is she to me ?—a friend—a friend !  
 And I would have her wed. 'Twere best for both—  
 A balm for conscience—an excuse for change !  
 'Twere best :—I marvel much if she'll accept him !

[*Exit Louis.*

## SCENE II.

*A private apartment in the Palace of the Duchess de la Valliere.*

*Enter the Duchess de la Valliere.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

He loves me, then, no longer ! All the words  
 Earth knows shape but one thought—' He loves no longer !'  
 Where shall I turn ? My mother—my poor mother !  
 Sleeps the long sleep ! 'Tis better so ! Her life  
 Ran to its lees. I will not mourn for her.  
 But it is hard to be alone on earth !  
 This love, for which I gave so much, is dead,  
 Save in my heart ; and love, surviving love,  
 Changes its nature, and becomes despair !  
 Ah, me !—how hateful is this world !

*Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.*

GENTLEMAN.

The Duke de Lauzun !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

News, sweet news, of Louis !

*Enter Lauzun.*

LAUZUN.

Dare I disturb your thoughts ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

My Lord, you're welcome !

Came you from court to-day ?

LAUZUN.

I left the King

But just now, in the gardens.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*eagerly.*)

Well !

LAUZUN.

He bore him

With his accustomed health !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Proceed.

LAUZUN.

Dear Lady,

I have no more to tell.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*aside.*)

Alas ! No message !

LAUZUN.

We did converse, 'tis true, upon a subject  
Most dear to one of us. Your Grace divines it ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*joyfully.*)

Was it of *me* he spoke ?

LAUZUN.

*Of you*  
I spoke, and *he* replied. I praised your beauty—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

You praised !

LAUZUN.

Your form, your face—that wealth of mind  
Which, play'd you not the miser, and concealed it,  
Would buy up all the coins that pass for wit.  
The King, assenting, wished he might behold you  
As happy—as your virtues should have made you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

'Twas said in mockery !

LAUZUN.

*Lady, no !—in kindness.*  
Nay, more, (he added,) would you yet your will  
Mould to his wish—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

*His wish !—the lightest !*

LAUZUN.

*Ah !*  
You know not how my heart throbs while you speak !  
Be not so rash to promise ; or, at least,  
Be faithful to perform !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

You speak in riddles.

LAUZUN.

Of your lone state and beautiful affections,  
Formed to make an home an Eden, our good King,  
Tenderly mindful, fain would see you link

Your lot to one whose love might be your shelter.  
He spake, and all my long-concealed emotions  
Gush'd into words, and I confess'd—O Lady,  
Hear me confess once more—how well I love thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.]

You dared?—and *he*—the King—

LAUZUN.

Upon me smiled,

And bade me prosper.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE:

Ah!

*(Sinks down, and covers her face with her hands)*

LAUZUN.

Nay, nay, look up!

The heart that could forsake a love like thine  
Doth not deserve regret. Look up, dear Lady!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

He bade thee prosper!

LAUZUN.

Pardon, my wild hope

Outran discretion.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Louis bade thee prosper!

LAUZUN.

Ah, if this thankless—this remorseless love  
Thou couldst forget! Oh, give me but thy friendship,  
And take respect, faith, worship, all, in Lauzun!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Consign me to another! Well, 'tis well!  
Earth's latest tie is broke!—earth's hopes are over!

LAUZUN.

Speak to me sweet Louise!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

So, thou art he  
To whom this shattered heart should be surrendered?—  
And thou, the high-born, glittering, scornful Lauzun,  
Wouldst take the cast-off leman of a King,  
Nor think thyself disgraced! Fiè!—fiè! thour't shameless!

LAUZUN.

You were betray'd by love, and not by sin,  
Nor low ambition. Your disgrace is honor  
By the false side of dames the world calls spotless.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Go, sire, nor make me scorn you. If I've erred,  
I know at least the majesty of virtue,  
And feel—what you forget.

LAUZUN.

Yet hear me, Madam!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Go, go! You are the King's friend—you were mine;  
I would not have you thus debased: refused  
By one at once the fallen and forsaken!  
*His friend shall not be shamed so!*

*[Exit the Duchess de la Valliere.]*

LAUZUN (*passing his hand over his eyes.*)

I do swear  
These eyes are moist! And he who owned this gem  
Casts it away, and cries 'divine' to tinsel!  
So falls my hope. My fortunes call me back  
To surer schemes. Before that ray of goodness



How many plots shrunk, blinded, into shadow !  
Lauzun forgot himself, and dreamt of virtue !

[*Exit Lauzun.*]

### SCENE III.

*Gentleman of the Chamber, and Bragelone, as a  
Franciscan friar.*

GENTLEMAN.

The Duchess gone ! I fear me that, to-day,  
You are too late for audience, reverend father.

BRAGELONE.

Audience !—a royal phrase !—it suits the Duchess.  
Go, son ; announce me.

GENTLEMAN.

By what name, my father ?

BRAGELONE.

I've done with names. Announce a nameless monk,  
Whose prayers have risen o'er some graves she honors.

GENTLEMAN. (*aside.*)

My lady is too lavish of her bounty  
To these proud shavelings : yet, methinks this friar  
Hath less of priest than warrior in his bearing.  
He awes me with his stern and thrilling voice,  
His stately gesture, and imperious eye.  
And yet I swear he comes for alms !—the varlet !  
Why should I heed him ?

BRAGELONE.

Didst thou hear ? Begone !

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

Yes, she will know me not. My lealest soldier,

One who had march'd bare-breasted on the steel,  
 If I had bid him cast away the treasure  
 Of the o'er-valued life ; the nurse that reared me,  
 Or mine own mother, in these shroudlike robes,  
 And in the immature and rapid age  
 Which, from my numb'd and withering heart, hath crept  
 Unto my features, now might gaze upon me,  
 And pass the stranger by. Why should she know me,  
 If they who lov'd me know not ? Hark ! I hear her :  
 That silver footfall !—still it hath to me  
 Its own peculiar and most spiritual music,  
 Trembling along the pulses of the air,  
 And dying on the heart that makes its echo !  
 'Tis she ! How lovely yet !

*Enter the Duchess de la Valliere.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Your blessing, father.

BRAGELONE.

Let courts and courtiers bless the favored Duchess :  
 Courts bless the proud ; God's ministers, the humble.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

He taunts me, this poor friar ! Well my father,  
 I have obeyed your summons. Do you seek  
 Masses for souls departed ?—or the debt  
 The wealthy owe the poor ?—say on !

BRAGELONE (*Aside.*)

Her heart  
 Is not yet hardened ! Daughter, such a mission  
 Were sweeter than the task which urged me hither :  
 You had a lover once—a plain, bold soldier  
 He loved you well ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ah, Heaven !

BRAGELONE.

And you forsook him.  
Your choice was natural—some might call it noble !  
And this blunt soldier pardoned the *desertion*,  
But sunk at what his folly termed *dishonor*.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

O, Father, spare me !—if dishonor were,  
It rested but with me.

BRAGELONE.

So deemed the world,  
But not that foolish soldier !—he had learned  
To blend his thoughts, his fame, *himself*, with thee ;  
Thou wert a purer, a diviner self ;  
He loved thee as a warrior worships glory ;  
He loved thee as a Roman honored virtue ;  
He loved thee as thy sex adore ambition ;  
And when Pollution breathed upon his idol,  
It blasted glory, virtue, and ambition,  
Fill'd up each crevice in the world of thought,  
And poisoned earth with thy contagious shame !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Spare me ! in mercy spare me !

BRAGELONE.

This poor fool,  
This shadow, living only on thy light,  
When thou wert darkened, could but choose to die.  
He left the wars ;—No fame, since *thine* was dim :  
He left his land ;—what home without Louise ?  
It broke—that stubborn, stern, unbending heart—  
It broke ! and breaking its last sigh—forgave thee !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ah, Heaven!

BRAGELONE.

One summer eve, methinks, he told me,  
Thy hand around his hauberk wound a scarf;  
And thy voice bade him 'Wear it for the sake  
Of one who honored worth!' Were those the words?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

They were. Alas! alas!

BRAGELONE.

He wore it, Lady,  
Till memory ceased. It was to him the token  
Of a sweet dream; and, from his quiet grave,  
He sends it now to thee.—Its hues are faded.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Give it me!—let me bathe it with my tears!  
Memorial of my guilt—

BRAGELONE (*in a soft and tender accent.*)

And his forgiveness!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

That tone!—ha! while thou speakest, in thy voice,  
And in thy presence there is something kindred  
To him we jointly mourn: thou art—

BRAGELONE.

His brother;  
Of whom, perchance, in ancient years he told thee;  
Who, early wearied of this garish world,  
Fled to convent-shade, and found repose.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*approaching*)

Ay, is it so?—thou'rt Bragelone's brother?

Why, then, thou art what *he* would be, if living—  
A friend to one most friendless !

BRAGELONE.

Friendless!—Ay,  
Thou hast learnt, betimes, the truth, that man's wild pas-  
sion  
Makes but its sport of virtue, peace, affection ;  
And breaks the plaything when the game is done !  
Friendless!—I pity thee !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Oh ! holy Father,  
Stay with me ?—succor me !—reprove, but guide me :  
Teach me to wean my thoughts from earth to heaven,  
And be what God ordained his chosen priests—  
Foes to our sin, but friends to our despair.

BRAGELONE.

Daughter, a heavenly and a welcome duty,  
But one most rigid and austere : there is  
No composition with our debts of sin.  
God claims thy soul ; and, lo ! his creature there !  
Thy choice must be between them—God or man,  
Virtue or guilt ; a Louis or—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

A Louis !  
Not mine the poor atonement of the choice :  
I am, myself, the Abandoned One !

BRAGELONE.

I know it ;  
Therefore my mission and my ministry.  
When he who loved thee died, he bade me wait  
The season when the sicklied blight of change  
Creeps o'er the bloom of Passion, when the way  
Is half prepared by Sorrow to Repentance,

And seek you then,—*he* trusted not in vain :  
Perchance an idle hope, but it consoled him.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

No, no ! not idle !—in my happiest hours,  
When the world smiled, a void was in this heart—  
The world could never fill : thy brother knew me !

BRAGELONE.

I do believe thee, daughter. Hear me yet ;  
My mission is not ended. When thy mother  
Lay on the bed of death (she went before  
The sterner heart the same blow broke more slowly):  
As thus she lay, around the swimming walls,  
Her dim eyes wandered, searching through the shadows,  
As if the spirit, half-redeemed from clay,  
Could force its will to shape, and, from the darkness,  
Body a daughter's image,—(nay, be still !)  
Thou wert not there ;—alas ! thy shame had murdered  
Even the blessed sadness of that duty !  
But o'er that pillow watched a sleepless eye,  
And by that couch moved one untiring step,  
And o'er that suffering rose a ceaseless prayer ;  
And still thy mother's voice, wheno'er it called  
Upon a daughter—found a son !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

O God !

Have mercy on me !

BRAGELONE.

Coldly, through the lattice,  
Gleamed the slow dawn, and, from their latest sleep,  
Woke the sad eyes it was not *thine* to close !  
And, as they fell upon the haggard brow,  
And the thin hairs—grown grey, but not by Time—  
Of that lone watcher—while upon her heart  
Gushed all the memories of the mighty wrecks

Thy guilt had made of what were once the shrines  
For Honor, Peace, and God!—that aged woman,  
(She was a hero's wife) upraised her voice  
To curse her child!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Go on!—be kind, and kill me!

BRAGELONE.

Then he, whom thoughts of what he *was* to thee  
Had made her son, arrested on her lips  
The awful doom, and, from the earlier past,  
Invoked a tenderer spell—a holier image:  
Painted thy gentle, soft, obedient childhood—  
Thy guileless youth, lone state, and strong temptation;  
Thy very sin the overflow of thoughts  
From wells whose source was innocence; and, thus,  
Sought with the sunshine of thy maiden spring  
To melt the ice that lay upon her heart,  
Till all the mother flowed again!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

And she?—

BRAGELONE.

Spoke only once again! She died—and *blest* thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*rushing out.*)

No more!—I *can* no more!—my heart is breaking!

BRAGELONE.

The angel hath not left her!—if the plumes  
Have lost the whiteness of their younger glory,  
The wings have still the instinct of the skies,  
And yet shall bear her up!

LOUIS (*without.*)

We need you not, Sir;  
Ourselves will seek the Duchess.

BRAGELONE.

The King's voice !  
How my flesh creeps !—my foe, and her drestroyer !  
The ruthless, heartless—

*(His hand seeks, rapidly and mechanically, for his sword-hilt.)*

Why, why !—where's my sword ?  
O Lord ! I do forget myself to dotage :  
The soldier, now, is a poor helpless monk,  
That hath not even curses ! Satan, hence !  
Get thee behind me, Tempter !—There, I'm calm.

#### SCENE IV.

*Louis — Bragelone.*

LOUIS.

I can no more hold parley with impatience,  
But long to learn how Lauzun's courtship prospers.  
She is not here. At prayers, perhaps. The Duchess  
Hath grown devout. A friar !—Save you, father !

BRAGELONE.

I thank thee, son.

LOUIS.

He knows me not. Well, Monk,  
Are you her Grace's almoner ?

BRAGELONE.

Sire, no !

LOUIS.

So short, yet know us ?



BRAGELONE.

Sire, I do. You are

The man—

LOUIS.

How, priest!—the *man*!

BRAGELONE.

The word offends you?

*The King*, who raised a maiden to a Duchess,  
That maiden's father was a gallant subject:  
Kingly reward!—you made his daughter Duchess.  
That maiden's mother was a stainless matron:  
Her heart you broke, though mother to a Duchess!  
That maiden was affianced from her youth  
To one who served you well—nay, saved your life:  
*His* life you robbed of all that gave life value;  
And yet—you made his fair betrothed a Duchess!  
You are that King. The world proclaims you 'Great';  
A million warriors bled to buy your laurels;  
A million peasants starved to build Versailles:  
Your people famish; but your court is splendid!  
Priests from their pulpits bless your glorious reign;  
Poets have sung the greater than Augustus;  
And painters placed you on immortal canvas,  
Limn'd as the Jove whose thunders awe the world.  
But to the humble minister of God,  
You are the King who has betrayed his trust—  
Beggared a nation but to bloat a court,  
Seen in men's lives the pastime to ambition,  
Looked but on virtue as the toy for vice;  
And, for the first time, from a subject's lips,  
Now learns the name he leaves to Time and God!

LOUIS.

Add to the bead-roll of that King's offences  
That, when a foul-mouthed Monk assumed the rebel,  
The Monster-King forgave him. Hast thou done?

BRAGELONE.

Your changing hues belie your royal mien ;  
Ill the high monarch veils the trembling man !

LOUIS.

Well, you are privileged ! It ne'er was said  
The Fourteenth Louis, in his proudest hour,  
Bow'd not his sceptre to the Church's crozier.

BRAGELONE.

Alas ! *the Church* ! 'Tis true, this garb of serge  
Dares speech that daunts the ermine, and walks free  
Where stout hearts tremble in the triple mail.  
But wherefore ?—Lies the virtue in the robe,  
Which the moth eats ? or in these senseless beads ?  
Or in the name of Priest ? The Pharisees  
Had priests that gave their Saviour to the cross !  
No ! we have high immunity and sanction,  
That Truth may teach humanity to Power,  
Glide through the dungeon, pierce the armed throng,  
Awaken Luxury on her Sybarite couch,  
And, startling souls that slumber on a throne,  
Bow kings before that priest of priests—THE CONSCIENCE !

LOUIS (*aside.*)

An awful man !—unlike the reverend crew  
Who praise my royal virtues in the pulpit,  
And—ask for bishoprics when church is over !

BRAGELONE.

This makes us sacred. The profane are they  
Honoring the herald while they scorn the mission.  
The King who serves the church, yet clings to mammon,  
Who fears the pastor, but forgets the flock,  
Who bows before the monitor, and yet  
Will ne'er forego the sin, may sink, when age  
Palsies the lust and deadens the temptation,  
To the priest-ridden, not repentant, dotard,—

For pious hopes hail superstitious terrors,  
And seek some sleek Iscariot of the church,  
To sell salvation for the thirty pieces!

LOUIS (*aside.*)

He speaks as one inspired!

BRAGELONE.

Awake!—awake!

Great though thou art, awake thee from the dream  
That earth was made for kings—mankind for slaughter—  
Women for lust—the People for the Palace!  
Dark warnings have gone forth; along the air  
Lingers the crash of the first Charles's throne!  
Behold the young, the fair, the haughty king!  
The kneeling courtiers, and the flattering priests;  
Lo! where the palace rose, behold the scaffold—  
The crowd—the axe—the headsman—and the Victim!  
Lord of the silver lilies, canst thou tell  
If the same fate await not thy descendant!  
If some meek son of thine imperial line  
May make no brother to yon headless spectre!  
And when the sage who saddens o'er the end  
Tracks back the causes, tremble lest he find  
The seeds—thy wars, thy pomp, and thy profusion  
Sowed in a heartless court and breadless people,  
Grew to the tree from which men shaped the scaffold,—  
And the long glare of thy funereal glories  
Light unborn monarchs to a ghastly grave!  
Beware, proud King! the Present cries aloud,  
A prophet to the Future! Wake!—beware!

[*Exit Bragelone.*]

LOUIS.

Gone! Most ill-omened voice and fearful shape!  
Scarce seemed it of the earth; a thing that breathed  
But to fulfil some dark and dire behest;  
To appal us, and to vanish.—The quick blood  
Halts in my veins. Oh! never till this hour

Heard I the voice that awed the soul of Louis,  
 Or met one brow that did not quail before  
 My kingly gaze ! And this unmitred monk !  
 I'm glad that none were by.—It was a dream ;  
 So let its memory like a dream depart.  
 I am no tyrant—nay, I love my people.  
 My wars were made but for the fame of France !  
 My pomp ! why, tush !—what king can play the hermit ?  
 My conscience smites me not ; and but last eve  
 I did confess, and was absolved !—A bigot ;  
 And half methinks, a heretic ! I wish  
 The Jesuits had the probing of his doctrines.  
 Well, well 'tis o'er !—what ho, there !

*Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.*

LOUIS.

Wine ! Apprise  
 Once more the Duchess of our presence.—Stay ?  
 Yon Monk what doth he here ?

GENTLEMAN.

I know not, Sire,  
 Nor saw him till this day.

LOUIS.

Strange !—Wine !  
 [*Exit Gentleman.*]

## SCENE V.

*Duchess de la Valliere.—Louis.*

Well, Madam,  
We've tarried long your coming, and meanwhile  
Have found your proxy in a madman monk,  
Whom, for the future, we would pray you spare us.

*(Re-enter Gentleman with wine.)*

So, so! the draught restores us. Fair La Valliere  
Make not yon holy man your confessor;  
You'll find small comfort in his lectures.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire,

His meaning is more kindly than his manner.  
I pray you, pardon him.

LOUIS.

Ay, ay! no more;  
Let's think of him no more. You had, this morn,  
A courtlier visitant, methinks,—De Lauzun?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Yes, Sire.

LOUIS.

A smooth and gallant gentleman.  
You're silent. Silence is assent;—'tis well!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE *(Aside.)*

Down my full heart! the Duke declares your wish  
Is that—that I should bind this broken heart  
And—no! I cannot speak—

*(With great and sudden energy.)*

*You wish me wed Sire?*

LOUIS.

'Twere best that you should wed ; and yet, De Lauzun  
Is scarce the happiest choice.—But as thou wilt.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

'Twere best that I should wed !' thou saidst it Louis ;  
Say it once more !

LOUIS.

In honesty, I think so .

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

My choice is made then—I obey the fiat  
And will become a bride !

LOUIS.

The Duke has sped !  
I trust he loves thyself, and not thy dower.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

The Duke ! what, hast thou read so ill this soul  
That thou couldst deem thus meanly of that book  
Whose every page was bared to thee ? A bitter  
Lot has been mine—and this sums up the measure.  
Go, Louis ! go !—All glorious as thou art—  
Earth's Agamemnon—the great king of men—  
Thou wert not worthy of this woman's heart !

LOUIS.

Her passion moves me !—Then your choice has fallen  
Upon a nobler bridegroom ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Sire, it hath !

LOUIS.

May I demand that choice ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Too soon thou'lt learn it.

Not yet! Ah me!

LOUIS.

Nay, sigh not, my sweet Duchess.  
Speak not so sadly. What, though love hath past,  
Friendship remains; and still my fondest hope  
Is to behold thee happy. Come!—thy hand;  
Let us be friends! We are so!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

*Friends!—No more!*

So, it hath come to this! I am contented!  
Yes—we are friends!

LOUIS.

And when your choice is made,  
You will permit your friend to hail your bridal.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ay, when my choice is made!

LOUIS.

This poor De Lauzun  
Hath then no chance? I'm glad of it, and thus  
Seal our new bond of friendship on your hand.  
Adieu!—and Heaven protect you!

*[Exit Louis.]*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*gazing after him.*)

Heaven hath heard thee,  
And in this last most cruel, but most gracious,  
Proof of thy coldness, breaks the lingering chain  
That bound my soul to earth.

*(Enter Bragelone.)*

O holy father!

Brother to him whose grave my guilt prepared,  
Witness my firm resolve, support my struggles,  
And guide me back to Virtue through Repentance !

BRAGELONE.

Pause, ere thou dost decide.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I've paused too long,  
And now, impatient of this weary load,  
Sigh for repose.

BRAGELONE.

Oh, Heaven, receive her back !  
Through the wide earth, the sorrowing dove hath flown,  
And found no haven ; weary though her wing  
And sullied with the dust of lengthened travail,  
Now let her flee away and be at rest !  
The peace that man has broken—THOU restore  
Whose holiest name is FATHER !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Hear us, Heaven !

END OF ACT IV.



## ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*The Gardens at Versailles.**Enter Madame de Montespan, Grammont, and Courtiers.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

So she has fled from court—the saintly Duchess ;  
 A convent's gate must shield this timorous virtue.  
 Methinks they're not so many to assail it !  
 Well, trust me, one short moon of fast and penance  
 Will bring us back the recreant novice——

GRAMMONT.

And

End the eventful comedy by marriage.  
 Lauzun against the world were even odds ;  
 But Lauzun *with* the world—what saint can stand.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Lauzun!—the traitor! What! to give my rival  
 The triumph to reject the lawful love  
 Of him whose lawless passion first betrayed me !

GRAMMONT.

Talk of the devil! Humph—you know the proverb.

*Enter Lauzun.*

LAUZUN.

Good day, my friends. Your pardon, Madam ; I  
 Thought 'twas the sun that blinded me.—(*Aside.*) Athens !  
 Pray you, a word.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

*(Aloud, and turning away disdainfully.)*

We're not at leisure, Duke:

LAUZUN.

Ha! *(Aside.)* Nay, Athene, spare your friend these graces.

Forget your state one moment; have you asked  
The King! the office that you undertook  
To make my own? My creditors are urgent.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN *(aloud.)*

No, my Lord Duke, I have not asked the King!  
I grieve to hear your fortunes are so broken,  
And that your honored and august device,  
To mend them by your marriage, failed.

GRAMMONT.

She hits him

Hard on the hip. Ha, ha!—the poor De Lauzun!

LAUZUN.

Sir!—Nay, I'm calm!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Pray, may we dare to ask  
How long you've loved the Duchess?

LAUZUN.

Ever since

You were her friend and confidante.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You're bitter.

Perchance you deem your love a thing to boast of.

LAUZUN.

To boast of!—Yes! 'Tis something ev'n to love  
The only woman Louis ever honored.

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MADAME DE MONTESPAN—*(laying her hand on Lauzun's arm.)*

Insolent! You shall rue this! If I speak  
Your name to Louis, coupled with a favor,  
The suit shall be your banishment!

*[Exit Madame de Montespan.]*

FIRST COURTIER.

Let's follow.

Ha! ha!—Dear Duke, your game, I fear, is lost!  
You've played the knave, and thrown away the king.

COURTIERS.

Ha! ha!—Adieu!

*[Exeunt.]*

LAUZUN.

Ha! ha!—the devil take you!

## SCENE II.

*Enter to Lauzun the Marquis de Montespan.*

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

My wife's not here! that's well! We're not to speak;  
But, when we meet, I bow—she smiles politely.  
A hundred thousand crowns for being civil  
To one another! Well, now that's a thing  
That happens but to Marquises. It shews  
My value in the state! The King esteems  
My comfort of such consequence to France,  
He pays me down a hundred thousand crowns  
Rather than let my wife disturb my temper!  
Lauzun! Aha! he seems as something crossed him.  
I will console him. Duke, I'm ravish'd!

LAUZUN.

Damn you!

## MONTESPAN.

Damn me! What! damn a Marquis! Heaven would think  
Twice of it, Sir, before it damn'd a man  
Of my rank! Damn a Marquis! there's religion!  
[Exit Montespan.]

## LAUZUN.

So she would ruin me! Fore-armed—fore-warned!  
I have the King's ear yet, and know some secrets  
That could destroy her! Since La Valliere's flight,  
Louis grows sad and thoughtful, and looks cold  
On her vain rival, who too coarsely shews  
The world the stuff court ladies' hearts are made of.  
She will undo herself—and I will help her.  
Weave on thy web, false Montespan, weave on;  
The bigger spider shall devour the smaller.  
The war's declared—'tis clear that one must fall:—  
I'll be polite—the *Lady* to the wall!

*Exit Lauzun.*

## SCENE III.

*Sunset—the old Chateau of La Valliere—the Convent of  
the Carmelites at a distance—the same scene as that  
with which the play opens.*

*Enter the Duchess de la Valliere and Bragelone from  
the Chateau.*

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Once more, ere yet I take farewell of earth,  
I see mine old, familiar, maiden home!  
All how unchanged!—the same the hour, the scene,  
The very season of the year!—the stillness  
Of the smooth wave—the stillness of the trees,  
Where the winds sleep like dreams!—and, oh! the calm  
Of the blue heavens around yon holy spires,  
Pointing like gospel truths, through calm and storm,  
To man's great home!

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Oh! how the years recede!

Upon this spot I spoke to her of love,  
And dreamt of bliss for earth!

(*The Vesper-bell tolls.*)

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Hark! the deep sound,  
That seems a voice from some invisible spirit,  
Claiming the world for God.—When last I heard it  
Hallow this air, here stood my mother, living;  
And I—was then a mother's *pride*!—and yonder  
Came thy brave brother in his glittering mail;  
And—ah! these thoughts are bitter!—were he living  
How would he scorn them!

BRAGELONE (*who has been greatly agitated.*)

No!—ah, no!—thou wrongst him!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Yet, were he living, could I but receive  
From his own lips my pardon, and his blessing,  
My soul would deem one dark memorial rased  
Out of the page most blistered with its tears!

BRAGELONE.

Then have thy wish! and in these wrecks of man  
Worn to decay, and rent by many a storm,  
Survey the worm the world called Bragelone.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Avaunt!—avaunt!—I dream!—the dead returned  
To earth to mock me!—No! this hand is warm!  
I have one murder less upon my soul.  
I thank thee, Heaven!—(*swoons.*)

BRAGELONE (*supporting her.*)

The blow strikes home; and yet  
What is my life to her? Louise!—She moves not;

She does not breathe; how still she sleeps!—I saw her  
 Sleep in her mother's arms, and then, in sleep  
 She smiled; There's no *smile* now!—poor child One kiss!  
 It is a brother's kiss—it has no guilt;  
 Kind Heaven, it has no guilt—I have survived  
 All earthlier thoughts: her crime, my vows, effaced them.  
 A brother's kiss!—Away! I'm human still;  
 I thought I had been stronger; God forgive me!  
 Awake, Louise!—awake! She breathes once more;  
 The spell is broke; the marble warms to life!  
 And I—freeze back to stone!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I heard a voice

That cried 'Louise!'—Speak, speak!—my sense is dim  
 And struggles darkly with a blessed ray  
 That shot from heaven.—My shame hath not destroyed  
 thee!

BRAGELONE.

No,—life might yet serve *thee*!—and I lived on  
 Dead to all else. I took the vows, and then,  
 Ere yet I laid me down, and bade the Past  
 Fade like a ghost before the dawn of heaven,  
 One sacred task was left.—If love was dust,  
 Love, like ourselves, has an immortal soul,  
 That doth survive whate'er it takes from clay;  
 And that—the holier part of love—became  
 A thing to watch thy step—a guardian spirit  
 To hover round, disguised, unknown, undream'd of,  
 To soothe the sorrow, to redeem the sin,  
 And lead thy soul to peace!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

O bright revenge!

Love strong as death, and nobler far than woman's!

BRAGELONE.

To *peace*—ah, let me deem so!—the mute cloister.

The spoken ritual, and the solemn veil,  
 Are nought themselves;—the Huguenot abjures  
 The monkish cell, but breathes, perchance, the prayer  
 That speeds as quick to the Eternal Throne!  
 In our own souls must be the solitude;  
 In our own thoughts the sanctity!—'Tis *then*  
 The feeling that our vows have built the wall  
 Passion can storm not, nor temptation sap,  
 Gives calm its charter, roots out wild regret,  
 And makes the heart the world-disdaining cloister.  
*This—this* is peace! but pause, if in thy breast  
 Linger the wish of earth. Alas! all oaths  
 Are vain, if nature shudders to record them—  
 The subtle spirit 'scapes the sealed vessel!  
 The false devotion is the true despair!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Fear not!—I feel 'tis not the walls of stone,  
 Told beads, nor murmured hymns, that bind the heart  
 Or exorcise the world; the spell's the thought  
 That where most weak we've banished the temptation,  
 And reconciled, what earth would still divide,  
 The human memories and the immortal conscience.

BRAGELONE.

Doubt fades before thine accents. On the day  
 That gives thee to the veil we'll meet ~~once~~ more.  
 Let mine be man's last blessing in this world.  
 Oh! tell me, then, thou'rt happier than thou ~~has~~ been;  
 And when we part, I'll seek some hermit cell  
 Beside the walls that compass thee, and prayer,  
 Morning and night, shall join our souls in heaven.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Yes, generous spirit! think not that my future  
 Shall be repining as the past. Thou livest,  
 And conscience smiles again. The shattered bark  
 Glides to its haven. Joy! the land is near.

*Exit the Duchess de la Valliere into the Chateau.*

## BRAGELONE.

So it is past!—the secret is disclosed!  
The hand she did reject on earth has led her  
To holier ties. I have not lived in vain!  
Yet who had dreamed, when through the ranks of war  
Went the loud shout of "France and Bragelone!"  
That the monk's cowl would close on all my laurels?  
A never-heard philosopher is Life!—  
Our happiest hours are sleep's;—and sleep proclaims,  
Did we but listen to its warning voice,  
That **REST** is earth's elixir. Why, then, pine  
That, ere our years grow feverish with their toil,  
Too weary-worn to find the rest they sigh for,  
We learn betimes **THE MORAL OF REPOSE**?  
I will lie down, and sleep away this world.  
The pause of care, the slumber of tired passion,  
Why, why defer till night is well nigh spent?  
When the brief sun that gild the landscape sets,  
When o'er the music on the leaves of life  
Chill silence falls, and every fluttering hope  
That voiced the world with song has gone to roost,  
Then let thy soul, from the poor laborer, learn  
'Sleep's sweetest taken soonest!'

*(As he moves away, his eye falls upon a glove dropped  
by the Duchess de la Vallière—he takes it up.)*

And this hath touched her hand!—it were a comfort  
To hoard a single relic!

*(Kisses the glove, and then suddenly dropping it)*

No!—'tis sinful!

*[Exit Bragelone.]*



## SCENE IV.

*The exterior of the Gothic Convent of the Carmelites—  
The windows illumined—Music heard from within—  
A crowd without—Enter Courtier, Ladies, Priests,  
&c., and pass through the door of the Chapel, in the  
centre of the building.*

*Enter Lauzun from a door in the side wing of the Con-  
vent—To him, Grammont.*

LAUZUN.

Where hast thou left the King?

GRAMMONT.

Not one league hence.

LAUZUN.

Ere the clock strikes, La Valliere takes the veil.

GRAMMONT.

Great Heaven! so soon!—and Louis sent me on,  
To learn how thou hadst prospered with the Duchess.  
He is so sanguine—this imperious King,  
Who never heard a “No” from living lips!  
How did she take his letter?

LAUZUN.

In sad silence;

Then mused a little while, and some few tears  
Stole down her cheeks, as, with a trembling hand,  
She gave me back the scroll.

GRAMMONT.

You mean her answer.

LAUZUN.

No ; the King's letter. " Tell him that I thank him ;"  
(Such were her words ;) " but that my choice is made ;  
And ev'n this last assurance of his love  
I dare not keep : 'tis only when I pray,  
That I may think of him. This is my answer."

GRAMMONT.

No more ?—no written word ?

LAUZUN.

None, Grammont. Then  
She rose and left me ; and I heard the bell  
Calling the world to see a woman scorn it.

GRAMMONT.

The King will never brook it. He will grasp her  
Back from this yawning tomb of living souls.  
The news came on with such a sudden shock ;  
The long noviciate thus abridged ; and she,  
Ever so waxen to his wayward will !  
She cannot yet be marble.

LAUZUN.

Wronged affection  
Makes many a Niobe from tears. Haste, Grammont,  
Back to the King, and bid him fly to save,  
Or nerve his heart to lose her. I will follow,  
My *second* charge fulfilled.

GRAMMONT.

And what is that ?

LAUZUN.

Revenge and justice !—Go !

[*Exit Grammont.*

LAUZUN (*looking down the stage.*)

I hear her laugh—

I catch the glitter of her festive robe!  
Athene comes to triumph—and to tremble!

## SCENE V.

*Madame de Montespán, Courtiers, and Lauzun.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Now for the crowning cup of sparkling fortune!  
A rarer pearl than Egypt's queen dissolved  
I have immersed in that delicious draught,  
A woman's triumph o'er a fairer rival!  
(*As she turns to enter the convent, she perceives Lauzun.*)  
What! you here, Duke?

LAUZUN.

Ay, Madam; I've not yet  
To thank you for—my banishment!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The Ides  
Of March are come—not over!

LAUZUN.

Are they not?  
For some they may be! You are here to witness—

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

My triumph!

LAUZUN.

And to take a *friend's* condolence.  
I bear this letter from the King!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The King!

(*Reads the letter.*)

"We do not blame you; blame belongs to love,  
And love had nought with you."—What! What! I  
tremble!

"The Duke de Lauzun, of these lines the bearer,  
Confirms their purport; from our royal court  
We do excuse your presence." Banished, Duke?  
Is that the word?—What, banished!

LAUZUN.

Hush!—you mar  
The holy silence of the place. 'Tis true;  
You read aright. Our gracious King permits you  
To quit Versailles. Versailles is not the world.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perdition!—banished!

LAUZUN.

You can take the veil,  
Meanwhile enjoy *your triumph*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Triumph!—Ah!  
*She* triumphs o'er me to the last. My soul  
Finds hell on earth—and her's makes earth a heaven!

LAUZUN.

Hist!—will you walk within?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

O, hateful world  
What!—hath it come to this?

LAUZUN.

You spoil your triumph!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Lauzun, I thank thee!—thank thee—thank—and curse  
thee! [*Exit Madame de Montespan*]

LAUZUN (*looking after her with a subdued laugh.*)

Ha, ha!—the *broken* heart can know no pang  
 Like that which racks the *bad* heart when its sting  
 Poisons itself. Now then away to Louis.  
 The bell still tolls : there's time. This soft La Valliere !  
 The only thing that ever baffled Lauzun,  
 And felt not his revenge !—revenge, poor soul !  
 Revenge upon a dove !—she shall be saved  
 From the pale mummies of yon Memphian vault  
 Or the great Louis will be less than man,—  
 Or that fond sinner will be more than woman.

[*Exit Lauzun.*]

## SCENE VI.

*The interior of the Chapel of the Carmelite Convent—  
 On the foreground, Courtiers, Ladies, &c.—At the  
 back of the stage, the altar, only partially seen through  
 the surrounding throng—The Officials pass to and fro  
 swinging the censers—The stage darkened.—Lights  
 suspended along the aisle, and tapers by the altar.*

(*As the scene opens, solemn music, to which is chaunted the  
 following*)

### HYMN.

Come from the world, O weary soul,  
 For run the race and near the goal !  
 Flee from the net. O lonely dove,  
 Thy nest is built the clouds above !  
 Turn, wild and worn with panting fear,  
 And slake thy thirst, thou wounded deer,  
     In Jordan's holy springs !  
 Arise ! O fearful soul, arise !  
 For broke the chain and calm the skies !  
 As moths fly upward to the star,  
 The light allures thee from afar.  
 Though earth is lost, and space is wide,  
 The smile of God shall be thy guide,  
     And Faith and Hope thy wings !

*(As the Hymn ends, Bragelone enters, and stands apart in the background.)*

FIRST COURTIER.

Three minutes more, and earth has lost La Valliere!

SECOND COURTIER.

So young!—so fair!

THIRD COURTIER.

'Twas whispered, that the King  
Would save her yet!

FIRST COURTIER.

What! snatch her from the altar?  
He durst not, man!

*Enter Louis, Grammont, and Lauzun.*

LOUIS.

Hold! we forbid the rites!

*(As the King advances hastily up the aisle, Bragelone places himself before him.)*

Back, monk! revere the presence of the King!

BRAGELONE.

And thou the palace of the King of kings!

LOUIS.

Dotard! we claim our subject.

BRAGELONE.

She hath past  
The limit of your realm. Ye priests of God,  
Complete your solemn task!—The church's curse  
Hangs on the air. Descendant of Saint Louis,  
Move—and the avalanche falls!

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*(The Duchess de la Valliere, still drest in the bridal and gorgeous attire assumed before the taking of the veil, descends from the altar.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

No, holy friend!

I need it not; my soul is my protector.

Nay, thou may'st trust me.

BRAGELONE *(after a pause..)*

Thou art right.—I trust thee!

LOUIS.

*(Leading the Duchess de la Valliere to the front of the stage.)*

Thou hast not tak'n the veil?—Ev'n Time had mercy.

Thou art saved!—thou art saved!—to love—to life!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Ah, Sire!

LOUIS.

Call me not Sire! forget that dreary time  
When thou wert Duchess, and myself the King.  
Fly back, fly back, to those delicious hours  
When *I* was but thy lover and thy Louis!  
And thou my dream—my bird—my fairy flower—  
My violet, shrinking in the modest shade  
Until transplanted to this breast—to haunt  
The common air with odours! O! Louise!  
Hear me!—the fickle lust of change allured me,  
The pride thy virtues wounded armed against thee,  
Until I dreamed I loved thyself no longer;  
But now this dread resolve, this awe of parting,  
Re-binds me to thee—bares my soul before me—  
Dispels the lying mists that veiled thine image,  
And tells me that I never loved but thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I am not then despised!—thou lovest me still!  
And when I pray for thee, my heart may feel.  
That it hath nothing to forgive!

LOUIS.

Louise!

Thou dost renounce this gloomy purpose?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Never!

It is not gloomy!—think'st thou it is gloom  
To feel that, as my soul becomes more pure,  
Heaven will more kindly listen to the prayers  
That rise for *thee*?—is that thought *gloom*, my Louis?

LOUIS.

Oh! slay me not with tenderness! Remain!  
And if thy conscience startle at my love,  
Be still my friend—my angel!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I am weak,

But, in the knowledge of my weakness, strong!  
I could not breathe the air that's sweet with thee,  
Nor cease to love!—in flight my only safety;  
And were that flight not made by solemn vows  
Eternal, it were bootless; for the wings  
Of my wild soul know but two bournes to speed to—  
Louis and Heaven! And, oh! in Heaven at last  
My soul, unsinning, may unite with Louis!

LOUIS.

I do implore thee!—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

No; thou can'st not tempt me!  
My *heart* already is the nun.

LOUIS.

Thou know'st not



I have dismissed thy rival from the court.  
Return!—though mine no more, at least thy Louis  
Shall know no second love!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

What! wilt thou, Louis,  
Renounce for me eternally my rival,  
And live alone for——

LOUIS.

Thee! Louise, I swear it!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*raising her arms to Heaven.*)

Father! at length, I dare to hope for pardon,  
For now remorse may prove itself sincere!  
Bear witness, Heaven! I never loved this man  
So well as now! and never seemed *his* love  
Built on so sure a rock! Upon thine altar.  
I lay the offering. I revoke the past;  
For Louis, Heaven was left—and now I leave  
Louis, when tenfold more beloved, for Heaven!  
Ah! pray with me! Be this our latest token—  
This memory of sweet moments—sweet, though sinless!  
Ah! pray with me! that I may live till death  
The thought—‘we prayed together for forgiveness!’

LOUIS.

Oh! wherefore never knew I till this hour  
The treasure I shall lose! I dare not call thee  
Back from the Heaven where thou art half already!  
Thy soul demands celestial destinies,  
And stoops no more to earth. Be thine the peace,  
And mine the penance! Yet these awful walls,  
The rigid laws of this severest order,  
Yon spectral shapes, this human sepulchre,—  
And thou, the soft, the delicate, the highborn,  
The adored delight of Europe’s mightiest king,  
Thou canst not bear it!

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

I have borne much worse—  
*Thy change and thy desertion!*—Let it pass!  
There is no terror in the things without;  
Our souls alone the palace or the prison;  
And the one thought, that I have fled from sin  
Will fill the cell with images more glorious,  
And haunt its silence with a mightier music,  
Than ever thronged illumined halls, or broke  
From harps by mortal strung!

## LOUIS.

I will not hear thee!  
I cannot brave these thoughts. Thy angel voice  
But tells me what a sun of heavenly beauty  
Glides from the earth, and leaves my soul to darkness.  
This is *my* work!—'twas I for whom that soul  
Forsook its native element; for me,  
Sorrow consumed thy youth, and conscience gnawed  
That patient, tender, unreprouched heart.  
And now this crowns the whole! the priest—the altar—  
The sacrifice—the victim! Touch me not!  
Speak not! I am unmann'd enough already.  
I—I—I choke! These tears—let them speak for me.  
*Now! now* thy hand—O, God! farewell, for ever!  
[Exit Louis.]

## DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

For ever! till the angel's trump shall wake  
Affection from the grave. Ah! blessed thought.  
For ever! that's no word for earth; but angels  
Shall cry 'for ever' when we meet again:  
Be firm, my heart, be firm!

(After a pause, turning to Bragelone, with a slight smile.)

'Tis past! we've conquered!

*(The Duchess de la Valliere re-ascends to the altar—the crowd close around.)*

*Music,*

CHORUS.

Hark ! to the nuptial train are opened wide  
The Eternal Gates. Hosanna to the bride !

GRAMMONT.

She has ta'en the veil—the last dread rite is done.

ABBESS (*from the altar.*)

Sister Louise ! before the eternal grate  
Becomes thy barrier from the living world,  
It is allowed thee once more to behold  
The face of men, and bid farewell to friendship.

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Why do I shudder ? why shrinks back my being  
From our last gaze, like Nature from the Grave ?  
One moment, and one look, and o'er her image  
Thick darkness falls, till Death, that morning star,  
Heralds immortal day. I hear her steps  
Treading the mournful silence ; o'er my soul  
Pauses the freezing time. O Lord, support me !  
One effort more—one effort !—Wake, my soul !  
'Tis thy last trial ; wilt thou play the craven ?

*(The crowd give way, the Duchess de la Valliere, in the habit of the Carmelite nuns, passes down the steps of the altar, led by the Abbess—As she pauses to address those whom she recognises in the crowd, the chorus chaunts)—*

Sister, look and speak thy last,  
From the world thou'rt dying fast ;  
While farewell to life thou'rt giving,  
Dead already to the living.

Scene VI.] THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE. . 131

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*coming to the front of the stage, sees Lauzun.*)

Lauzun! thou serv'st a King, whate'er his faults,  
Who merits all thy service: honor—love him.  
His glory needs no friendship; but in sickness,  
Or sorrow, kings need love. Be faithful, Lauzun!  
And, far from thy loud world, one lowly voice  
Shall not forget thee.

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

All the strife is hushed!  
My heart's wild sea lies mute, and o'er the waves  
The Saviour walks.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE (*approaching Bragelone, and kneeling to him.*)

And now, oh! friend and father,  
Bless the poor Nun!

BRAGELONE.

As Duchess of La Valliere  
Thou wert not happy; as the Carmelite Sister  
Say—*art* thou happy?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.

Yes!

BRAGELONE. (*laying his hand on her head.*)

O Father, bless her!

CHORUS.

Hark! in heaven is mirth!  
Jubilate!  
Grief leaves guilt on earth!  
Jubilate!  
Joy for sin forgiven!  
Jubilate!  
Come, O Bride of Heaven!  
Jubilate!

*Curtain falls slowly.*

END.



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